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CS Historical Paper

No. 105

CLANDESTINE SERVICES HISTORY

RECORD OF PARAMILITARY ACTION
AGAINST THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT

OF CUBA

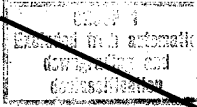
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USMC

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HISTORIAN'S NOTE

This monograph is based upon and primarily consists of a Memorandum for the Record, entitled "Paramilitary Action Against the Castro Government of Cuba: Record of," May 5, 1961, prepared by Colonel J. Hawkins, U.S. Marine Corps, who was detailed to the Agency, and as such, served as Chief of the Paramilitary Staff Section of Branch 4, Western Hemisphere Division. In this capacity, he participated in the planning and execution of the ZAPATA Operation, more commonly known as the Bay of Pigs Operation.

Colonel Hawkins' paper records significant information concerning preparation for and execution of paramilitary operations against the Castro Government of Cuba and draws conclusions based upon this experience, which as a background and reference document, he hoped, would serve a useful purpose for the future.

Although not written at the request of the CS Historical Board, this paper meets the basic requirements of a historical paper and has been included in the Catalog of CS Histories, as a segment of the WH Division history.


Kenneth K. Addicott
Executive Secretary
CS Historical Board

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SUMMARY

Colonel J. Hawkins, U.S. Marine Corps, has furnished in his Memorandum for the Record an account of the preparation for, the planning and execution of the paramilitary operations against the Castro Government of Cuba in 1961. The period covered is the latter part of the Eisenhower Administration and the first six months of President Kennedy's term. Basically, the theme is the paramilitary story and is intended to cover only these facets of the operation. It documents the events leading up to, during and following the Bay of Pigs Operation of April 16, 17, 18 and 19, 1961.

In recounting the facts, policies are reviewed on which the Task Force Headquarters, organized within the Western Hemisphere Division of the Clandestine Services of CIA, based its plan for action. The Task Force contained staff sections for planning and supervision of activities in the intelligence, counterintelligence, propaganda, political, logistical, and paramilitary fields. The need for liaison with the Department of State and the Department of Defense was apparent from the beginning. It had been determined early in the Eisenhower Administration that the highest levels of government would determine policy governing the Cuba project; thus, constant liaison should have been mandatory. CIA was represented on the Special Group (5412), which reported to the President,

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and it was to this Group that CIA presented operational matters for policy resolution.

No machinery existed for coordinating the project related work of governmental departments and agencies, other than through the Special Group, during most of the life of the project. There was never a formal Task Force arrangement which included representation of all departments and agencies which were or should have been concerned, such as the CIA, Department of State, Department of Defense, U.S. Information Agency, and the Department of Commerce. Instead, the project was the endeavor of CIA in liaison with other departments.

Intelligence information and estimates had indicated substantial resistance within Cuba to the Castro regime. Agents had reported the development of a widespread underground organization extending from Havana into all the Provinces. Obviously, if the efforts of these disaffected Cuban leaders, with their followers and other sympathetic individuals in the country had been successful, the effort would have been unnecessary. Realizing that it was not effective, and to circumvent Castro's plan to crush the guerrilla movement, action was begun in November 1960 to organize a strike force, the paramilitary part of which, for tactical reasons was divided into air and sea force operations.

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This strike force would now begin to recruit, organize, equip and train a larger ground force than the contingency force which was originally contemplated. The bulk of the attached paper describes in a wealth of detail the training camps (based in the U.S. and in friendly third countries) and support programs necessary for the ultimate implementation of the operation.

In a considered evaluation of the operation and in his capacity as Chief of the Paramilitary Staff of Cuba Project, Colonel Hawkins sets forth a series of conclusions, and presents realistic recommendations for future planning based upon his experiences which were often frustrating. He points out in a disenchanted fashion, more in sorrow than in anger, that experience indicates that political restrictions upon military measures may result in destroying the effectiveness of such efforts. The end result is political embarrassment coupled with military failure and loss of prestige in the world. If political considerations are such as to prohibit the application of those military steps ^{and} required to achieve the objective, then such military operations should not be undertaken.

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5 May 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Paramilitary Action Against the Castro Government
of Cuba; Record of

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this memorandum is to record significant information concerning preparation for and execution of paramilitary operations against the Castro Government of Cuba, and to draw conclusions based upon this experience which, it is hoped, may be useful for the future.

2. ORGANIZATION WITHIN C.I.A. FOR COVERT ACTION AGAINST THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT.

a. For purposes of this action, a task force headquarters was organized within the Western Hemisphere Division of the Clandestine Services of the Central Intelligence Agency. This task force contained staff sections for planning and

/supervision of activities

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supervision of activities in the intelligence, counter-intelligence, propaganda, political, logistical and paramilitary fields. The undersigned served as Chief of the Paramilitary Staff Section. The line of command within C.I.A. Headquarters for control of the Cuban operation was from the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Allen Dulles, to the Deputy Director (Plans), Mr. Richard M. Bissell, to the Chief, Western Hemisphere Division, Mr. J. C. King, to the Chief of the Task Force, Mr. Jacob D. Esterline.

b. The Task Force Headquarters did not include an integral air staff section, although air activity was a continuing and essential requirement throughout the operation. The Air Staff, with its headquarters in a separate building remote from Task Force Headquarters, was responsible directly to the Deputy Director (Plans), although in October, 1960, the Chief of the Air Section, in addition to his other duties, was placed under the direction of the Task Force Chief for matters concerning the project.

c. Major field activities as finally established included:

(1) A forward operating base at Miami, Florida, with a satellite communications center for relay of communications between Headquarters and the field and facilities in the Florida Keys for launching boat operations to Cuba. Recruiting was handled by the Miami Base.

(2) A base at the former Opa Locka Naval Air Station, which was used for storage of arms and munitions and for originating "black" passenger flights to Guatemala with Cuban recruits.

(3) An infantry training base and an air base in Southwestern Guatemala.

(4) An air and staging base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

(5) Air facilities at Eglin Air Force Base for logistical flights to Guatemala and Nicaragua.

(6) A training base at Belle Chase Naval Ammunition Depot, New Orleans (used briefly in March and April, 1961).

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(7) A small maritime training base at Vieques, Puerto Rico.

d. The Chief of the Task Force did not exercise command over field activities, and had authority to release cables concerning operational matters to the Forward Operating Base in Miami only. Cables and other directives to the field were normally released at the level of Chief, Western Hemisphere Division, while some directives dealing with major policy questions were released at the still higher level of the Deputy Director (Plans). The Chief of the Air Section was authorized to release air operational cables to any field activity, and in that sense had greater authority than the Task Force Chief, himself.

e. An additional echelon of command and control was interposed between Headquarters and field activities in foreign countries in that [] in each country [] the responsibility for all C.I.A. activity within that country, including in particular, the responsibility for liaison with the host government. Communications personnel and facilities were provided by the C.I.A. Office of Communications, under the Deputy Director (Support), one of the three major subdivisions of C.I.A. Headquarters. The Deputy Director (Support) also provided logistical support for the operation.

f. The Paramilitary Staff Section of the Task Force included subdivisions for intelligence, logistics, maritime operations, internal resistance operations and military operations. The table of organization provided a staff of 37 officers, but the average strength was about 24 of whom 6 were military. The undersigned, as chief of this staff section, had no command authority nor authority to release cables or other directives to the field.

3. ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES AT HIGHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT FOR DETERMINATION OF POLICY GOVERNING THE PROJECT.

a. The Special Group (5412).

(1) During the administration of President Eisenhower, this Group normally met once a week to consider matters concerning covert activity in various parts of the

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world, including Cuba. Principal members of this Group were the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Mr. Gray; the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Douglas; the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Dulles; and the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. Merchant. The Department of Defense was represented for a time during the life of the Cuban project by the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Mr. Erwin. Other representatives of Departments and Agencies concerned met from time to time with the Group. Mr. Thomas Mann, the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, attended on occasion when Cuba was to be discussed.

(2) It was to this Group that policy matters concerning Cuban operations were submitted by the C.I.A. for resolution during the previous administration.

(3) In regard to the Cuban project, the Special Group proved to be a slow and indecisive vehicle for determination of policy. It did not have authority itself to make important policy decisions, nor did it have a formalized procedure for reaching an agreed Group position on any given question. Disagreement by one member of the Group could prevent approval of a proposed action. Proceedings were verbal, and no master record of minutes was kept. Instead, each Department or Agency kept its own minutes as desired, and sometimes there were misunderstandings later as to just what had been said or agreed upon at previous meetings. No written, signed policy directives were ever forthcoming after Group meetings for guidance of the Cuban project within C.I.A. In fact, throughout the life of the project there were no written policy directives approved at the national level to guide the project other than the original policy paper approved by the President on 17 March 1960, which was general in content.

b. Liaison with Department of Defense. The point of contact for C.I.A. within the Department of Defense for Cuban matters was the Office of Special Operations until 4 January 1961. At that time, a special committee headed by Brigadier General D. W. Gray, U. S. Army, was established within the Joint Staff for purpose of liaison with C.I.A. in regard to the Cuba project.

c. Coordination of Governmental Departments and Agencies. No machinery existed for this purpose, other than the Special Group, during most of the life of the project, although for a time during the previous administration

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Ambassador Willauer was appointed by the President to serve as a coordinator of the Department of State and the C.I.A. There was never a formal task force arrangement including representation of all Departments and Agencies which were or should have been concerned, such as the C.I.A., Department of State, Department of Defense, U. S. Information Agency, and the Department of Commerce. Instead, the project was a more or less exclusive endeavor of C.I.A., in liaison with other Departments.

d. Policy Determination During the Present Administration.

During the present Administration, policy questions concerning the Cuba project were considered directly by the President himself in meetings which normally included, among others, the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director of Central Intelligence, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

4. EVOLUTION OF PARAMILITARY CONCEPTS.

a. The only approved, written policy governing paramilitary action against Cuba is contained in paragraph 2d of the Policy Paper approved by the President on 17 March 1960. This paragraph is quoted as follows:

"d. Preparations have already been made for the development of an adequate paramilitary force outside of Cuba, together with mechanisms for the necessary logistic support of covert military operations on the Island. Initially a cadre of leaders will be recruited after careful screening and trained as paramilitary instructors. In a second phase a number of paramilitary cadres will be trained at secure locations outside of the U. S. so as to be available for immediate deployment into Cuba to organize, train and lead resistance forces recruited there both before and after the establishment of one or more active centers of resistance. The creation of this capability will require a minimum of six months and probably closer to eight. In the meanwhile, a limited air capability for resupply and for infiltration and exfiltration already exists under C.I.A. control and can be rather easily expanded if and when the situation required. Within two months it is hoped to parallel this with a small air resupply capability under deep cover as a commercial operation in another country."

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b. Early concepts for paramilitary action to implement this approved policy involved:

(1) The recruitment, organization and training of a number of Cuban paramilitary agent teams. These teams were to include radio operators and personnel for the development and direction of intelligence, sabotage, propaganda, political and guerrilla activity within the target country.

(2) The introduction of these agent teams into the target country by clandestine or legal means.

(3) The development within the target country, through the medium of agents, of a large scale resistance movement, including sabotage, propaganda, political, and guerrilla activity.

(4) The organization and training of a Cuban air transport unit for use in supply overflights and other air operations.

(5) The supply of military arms and equipment to guerrilla and other resistance organizations by air drop or maritime delivery.

(6) The organization and training of a Cuban tactical air force equipped with B-26 light bombers.

c. Action was undertaken immediately to implement all of the above plans. Consideration was also given to the possibility of forming a small infantry force (200 to 300 men) for contingency employment in conjunction with other paramilitary operations.

d. During the period June through October, 1960, as the Soviet Bloc poured over 40,000 tons of military equipment into Cuba and Castro organized and equipped large forces of militia and established an effective Communist-style security system, the paramilitary staff studied the possibility of organizing an assault force of greater strength than the small contingency force previously planned. It was contemplated that

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this force would be landed in Cuba after effective resistance activity, including active guerrilla forces, had been developed. It should be noted that the guerrilla forces were operating successfully in the Escambray Mountains during this period. It was visualized that the landing of the assault force, after widespread resistance activity had been created, would, precipitate general uprisings and widespread defection among Castro's armed forces which could contribute materially to his overthrow.

e. The concept for employment of the force in an amphibious/airborne assault was discussed at meetings of the Special Group during November and December. The Group took no definite position on ultimate employment of such a force but did not oppose its continued development for possible employment. President Eisenhower was briefed on the concept in late November by C.I.A. representatives. The President indicated that he desired vigorous continuation of all activities then in progress by all Departments concerned.

5. RESULTS OF THE INTERNAL RESISTANCE PROGRAM, SEPTEMBER 1960 to APRIL 1961.

a. Introduction of Paramilitary Agents. Seventy trained paramilitary agents, including nineteen radio operators, were introduced into the target country. Seventeen radio operators succeeded in establishing communication circuits with C.I.A. Headquarters, although a number were later captured or lost their equipment.

b. Air Supply Operations. These operations were not successful. Of 27 missions attempted only 4 achieved desired results. The Cuban pilots demonstrated early that they did not have the required capabilities for this kind of operation. A request for authority to use American contract pilots for these missions was denied by the Special Group, although authority to hire pilots for possible eventual use was granted.

c. Sea Supply Operations. These operations achieved considerable success. Boats plying between Miami and Cuba delivered over 40 tons of military arms, explosives and equipment, and infiltrated/exfiltrated a large number of personnel. Some of the arms delivered were used for partially equipping a 400 man guerrilla force which operated for a considerable

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time in the Escambray Mountains of Las Villas Province. Much of the sabotage activity conducted in Havana and elsewhere was performed with materials supplied in this manner.

d. Development of Guerrilla Activity. Agents introduced into Cuba succeeded in developing a widespread underground organization extending from Havana into all of the Provinces. However, there was no truly effective guerrilla activity anywhere in Cuba except in the Escambray Mountains, where an estimated 600 to 1,000 ill-equipped guerrilla troops, organized in bands of from 50 to 200, operated successfully for over six months. C.I.A. never succeeded in establishing a direct radio link with any of these forces, although some communications with them were accomplished by radio to Havana and thence by courier. A C.I.A. trained coordinator for action in the Escambray entered Cuba clandestinely and succeeded in reaching the guerrilla area, but he was promptly captured and executed. Other small guerrilla units operated at times in Provinces of Pinar del Rio and Oriente, but they achieved no significant results. Agents reported large numbers of unarmed men in all provinces who were willing to participate in guerrilla activity if armed. The failure to make large-scale delivery of arms to these groups by aerial supply was a critical failure in the overall operation.

e. Sabotage.

(1) Sabotage activity during the period October 1960 to 15 April 1961 included the following:

(a) Approximately 300,000 tons of sugar cane destroyed in 800 separate fires.

(b) Approximately 150 other fires, including the burning of 42 tobacco warehouses, 2 paper plants, 1 sugar refinery, 2 dairies, 4 stores, 21 Communist homes.

(c) Approximately 110 bombings, including Communist Party offices, Havana power station, 2 stores, railroad terminal, bus terminal, militia barracks, railroad train.

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(d) Approximately 200 nuisance bombs in Havana Province.

(e) Derailment of 6 trains, destruction of a microwave cable and station, and destruction of numerous power transformers.

(f) A commando-type raid launched from the sea against Santiago which put the refinery out of action for about one week.

(2) These sabotage activities had considerable psychological value but accomplished no significant results otherwise.

f. Communist-Style Security Measures. As time went on, the police-state security measures imposed by Castro became increasingly effective, and agents and other resistance elements were hard pressed to survive. Many were captured, including three of the most important leaders under C.I.A. control. By stationing large numbers of militia and police throughout the country, by imposing curfews, by utilizing block wardens and security check points, and by seizing control of real estate in the cities through the Urban Reform Law, Castro was able to restrict the movements and activities of resistance elements to a crippling extent.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRIKE FORCE.

a. Action was begun on 4 November 1960, to recruit, organize, equip, and train a larger ground force than the small 200 to 300 man contingency force originally contemplated. It was planned at that time that this force would reach a strength of about 1,500 men. As this "Strike Force", as it came to be known, was developed over the ensuing months, many difficulties were encountered as a result of slowness in recruiting, political bickering among Cuban exile groups, lack of adequate training facilities and personnel, uncertainties with regard to whether Guatemala could continue to be used as a base, and lack of approved national policy on such questions as to what size force was desired, where and how it was to be trained, and whether such a force was actually ever to be employed. Some of the major problems encountered are described briefly below.

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b. Base for Training.

(1) The base available in Guatemala consisted of a small shelf of land on the side of a volcano barely large enough for comfortable accommodation of 200 men. Camp facilities were non-existent until the Cubans themselves, under American direction, threw up a few rude wooden buildings. As the population of the camp increased, living conditions became intolerably crowded, posing a serious morale problem among the troops and threatening the health of all. The only approach to the camp was over a narrow dirt road which wound its way up the mountainsides. In the dry season, the trip to the camp from the air base at Retalhuleu required about two hours by truck. In the rainy season, the road washed out frequently and became impassable to wheeled vehicles, while the camp itself was literally engulfed in the clouds. In the autumn of 1960, supplies had to be hauled up the mountain with tractors. There were no areas for infantry maneuver, but weapons could be fired at the camp site. Mortars were set up in the company street and fired over the buildings of the camp into impact areas on adjacent ridges.

(2) It appeared for a time in late 1960 that even this inadequate base would be lost, as the Department of State advanced the opinion that the presence of these activities in Guatemala would undermine the government of President Ydigoras and perhaps cause his overthrow. While the State Department urged withdrawal from Guatemala, it offered no alternative as to where the troops could be relocated. The possibility of using remote, unoccupied military facilities in the United States were raised, but this idea was opposed by the Department of State and was not approved by the Special Group. For a while, consideration was given to moving the troops to at Saipan, but this idea was abandoned on the valid grounds that the project would be delayed and logistical problems magnified. It was finally decided to remain in Guatemala, since this appeared to be the only possible solution.

c. Instructor Personnel. The only qualified instructor personnel available for training at the infantry training base consisted of four CIA civilian employees until November, 1960, when two Army officers and one non-commissioned officer from the Project Paramilitary Staff at Headquarters were sent to

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Guatemala as a stop-gap measure pending assignment of Army Special Forces training teams. These teams had been requested by the Paramilitary Staff on 28 October 1960, but there were long delays while policy governing this question was established, and it was 12 January 1961 before the 38 Special Forces personnel reached Guatemala. It would have been impossible for C.I.A. to train the Strike Force without the assistance of these Army personnel.

d. Logistical Support for Training. Most of the materials used for support of the infantry training base, including weapons, equipment and training ammunition, had to be lifted to Guatemala by air. This was a great logistical problem, considering the number of aircraft available and distances involved. Shortages of equipment and ammunition sometimes hampered training.

e. Recruiting.

(1) Recruiting in Miami was very slow until the end of 1960, as a result primarily of political maneuvering among the members of the Frente Revolucionario Democratico (FRD), the political front for the project. Each member of the FRD desired to accept only recruits loyal to his own political group, and all members of the FRD objected to recruitment of any former Cuban soldier who had served during the regime of Batista. Thus, personnel with previous military experience were for the most part denied to our use. All recruiting stopped for about four weeks during the confusion of an abortive revolution in Guatemala in November. There was continuing uncertainty as to whether sufficient recruits could ever be obtained to form a Strike Force of even minimal size until early January 1961, when 500 men had been obtained and recruits began arriving at a more rapid rate as a result of action taken to break the Cuban exile political barriers, which were delaying recruitment.

7. PREPARATIONS FOR TACTICAL AIR OPERATIONS.

a. Selection of Aircraft. The decision was reached to use the B-26 light bomber prior to the time when the undersigned joined the project on 1 September 1960. Aircraft of

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this type had been distributed to various foreign countries, including some in Latin America, and would, therefore, satisfy the requirement for non-attributability insofar as the United States was concerned. The Navy AD-6 was considered for a time as being superior to the B-26 for project purposes, but these aircraft had not been placed in the hands of Latin American governments and, therefore, could not meet the non-attributability requirement.

b. Tactical Air Base Problem.

(1) The air base constructed by C.I.A. at Retalhuleu, Guatemala, was at too great a distance from Cuba (750 miles from the central part of the Island) to serve for tactical air operations employing B-26 aircraft. The possibility of using a tactical air base in Mexico or in the Bahamas was explored with negative results. For a time, the President of Mexico indicated a willingness to permit use of the air field at Cozumel for limited staging operations over a 48 hour period. This was, of course, unsatisfactory for project purposes. The British were understandably reluctant to permit use of their territory for origination of tactical air strikes in connection with a United States-supported venture when the United States itself was unwilling to make similar use of its own territory.

(2) In October 1960, a C.I.A. delegation consulted with President Somoza of Nicaragua, who agreed to assist the project in any feasible way providing he received assurance from proper governmental authority that he would be supported politically by the United States if the question of Nicaraguan participation should ever be brought up for consideration by the Organization of American States or the United Nations. Such assurance was never given to the knowledge of the undersigned, but President Somoza nevertheless permitted development and use of Puerto Cabezas as an air and staging base.

(3) The use of facilities in Nicaragua was not looked upon with favor by the Department of State for political reasons, and for some months there was doubt as to whether the base would actually be used. Preparations at the base continued, however, and it was ready for use when the strike operations were launched in April 1961.

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(4) The air base at Puerto Cabezas was within 500 miles of central Cuba, within marginal striking range for the B-26 aircraft.

c. Tactical Pilots. By the end of December 1960, ten B-26 aircraft were available to the project. This number was later increased to fifteen on recommendation of the Paramilitary Staff. Five Cuban B-26 pilots were considered proficient by this time, and six others were in training but had not reached a state of acceptable proficiency. The undersigned expressed reservations in writing in January 1961, concerning the ability and motivation of the Cuban tactical pilots to accomplish what would be required and recommended use of American contract pilots in addition to the Cubans. This recommendation was considered by the Special Group, which authorized the hiring of American pilots but reserved the question of their actual employment for later decision.

d. Air Crew Training. Adequate U. S. Air Force personnel were available early in the life of the project for training Cuban B-26 as well as transport pilots. About 150 Air Force personnel were involved in the project, performing such duties as training, maintenance, air base management, logistical ferry work, etc.

8. SEA FORCES.

a. The acquisition of ships and craft for execution of the amphibious operation proved to be one of the most difficult problems encountered. How this problem was solved is described briefly in following paragraphs.

b. Landing Craft. Four LCVP and three LCU, reconditioned by the Navy, [redacted] and C.I.A. personnel were trained at Little Creek, Virginia, in their use. The Navy moved these craft to Vieques, Puerto Rico, where the C.I.A. operators trained Cuban crews. Utilizing a landing ship dock, the Navy was to deliver the landing craft, pre-loaded with vehicles and supplies to the objective area for the amphibious operation.

c. Transports. For acquisition of transports for troops and supplies, two possible courses of action were considered:

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(1) To purchase ships outright and recruit Cuban crews for them, or

(2) To charter ships.

d. As an initial experiment with the first course, two LCI's were bought and refitted through a ship broker in Miami, and mixed crews, including American contract masters and key officers along with Cuban crewmen, were placed on board. The use of American personnel in this capacity required approval of the Special Group. As a result of the inordinate delays and difficulties experienced in readying these two ships for sea, the idea of acquiring more ships in this manner was abandoned.

e. The way was opened to pursue the second course through contact by a member of the Paramilitary Staff with Mr. Eduardo Garcia, a Cuban national who, with his father and brother, owned a shipping company incorporated in Panama. Mr. Garcia agreed to charter any or all of the six ships owned by his company for project purposes. Five Garcia ships were eventually chartered for the operation, including two 1,500 ton motor vessels and three 2,000 ton steamships. The civilian crews of these merchant ships were for the most part Cuban or Spanish. Mr. Garcia made adjustments of all crews, dismissing members who did not wish to participate in the operation or were suspected of being Castro sympathizers and replacing these with Cubans recruited in Miami. Prior to execution of the operation, each of these ships was furnished with six 19 foot aluminum boats with outboard motors for use as auxiliary landing craft.

f. Later, two additional ships were chartered from the United Fruit Company for follow-up delivery of supplies and equipment after the assault phase.

9. EFFORT OF PARAMILITARY STAFF TO OBTAIN RESOLUTION OF MAJOR POLICY QUESTIONS - JANUARY 1961.

a. By the end of 1960, the development of land, sea and air forces for the amphibious/airborne assault had proceeded to an extent which permitted firm planning for conduct of the operation. The Paramilitary Staff by this time had developed

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a concept in some detail for employment of the force, although the invasion area had not been finally decided upon. Several major questions of national policy having important bearing upon the operation were as yet unresolved, however. These were:

- (1) Whether the national government would permit execution of the strike operation.
- (2) Whether the national government, if agreeable to the conduct of the operation, would permit its execution not later than 1 March 1961, which was the latest date considered desirable by the Paramilitary Staff.
- (3) Whether adequate tactical operations would be permitted in conjunction with the amphibious/airborne assault.
- (4) Whether American contract pilots could be used for tactical and logistical air operations over Cuba.
- (5) Whether the base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, could be used for tactical air operations and staging.
- (6) Whether an air base in the United States could be used for logistical flights to Cuba.

b. In an effort to cause resolution of these questions, the undersigned, on 4 January 1961, forwarded to superior authority within C.I.A. a memorandum which outlined the current status of preparations for amphibious/airborne and tactical air operations against Cuba and set forth the requirement for policy decisions on all of the questions listed above. Enclosure (1) is a copy of this memorandum. It should be noted in particular that the undersigned, in this memorandum, recommended:

- (1) That the air preparation commence not later than D minus 1 Day.
- (2) That any move to curtail the number of aircraft to be employed from those available be firmly resisted.

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(3) That the operation be abandoned if policy does not provide for use of adequate air support.

c. None of these policy questions, in the end, was resolved in the manner recommended by the undersigned, except in regard to use of the base at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

10. THE PREFERRED PLAN (TRINIDAD).

a. Reasons for Selection of Trinidad as the Preferred Landing Area:

(1) Extensive study for four months of the entire littoral of Cuba, including the Isle of Pines, led the Paramilitary Staff to select the Trinidad area of Las Villas Province as by far the best area for purposes of the amphibious/airborne landing. This area offered the following advantages:

(a) Good landing beaches with suitable routes of egress from the beach.

(b) An excellent drop zone for parachute troops near a terrain feature which dominated the town of Trinidad.

(c) Good defensive terrain dominating all approaches into the area.

(d) Excellent possibilities of isolating the objective area from approach by vehicular traffic. Mountain barriers protected the area from the north and west. The east flank was protected by an unfordable river with only two access bridges, one highway and one railroad, which could be destroyed by air or parachute demolition teams. The only other approach was along a coastal road from the west which crossed several bridges. Destruction of three key bridges could prevent the movement of truck convoys, tanks and artillery into the area.

(e) The area contained a hard-surfaced 3,500 foot air strip usable by C-46 aircraft (but not by B-26 light bombers) and a port facility at Casilda.

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(f) The town of Trinidad contained a population of 18,000, offering the possibility of immediate expansion of the landing force by volunteers. The people of Trinidad and of the entire area of Las Villas were known to be sympathetic to the anti-Castro guerrilla activity which persisted in the Escambray Mountains for many months.

(g) The objective area was immediately adjacent to the Escambray Mountains, the best guerrilla country in Cuba except for certain mountainous areas in Oriente Province of Eastern Cuba. If unable to hold a beachhead, the landing force would be able to retire to the mountains for guerrilla activity. In these mountains tanks and artillery could not be used against them.

(h) Cooperation could be expected from guerrilla forces, estimated at 600 to 1,000 men, which were then operating successfully in the Escambray Mountains.

(i) Expansion of activity in the mountains of Central Cuba offered the possibility of severing the island in the center.

(2) Members of the Joint Staff, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in an independent study of Cuba arrived at the same conclusion reached by the Project Paramilitary Staff -- that the Trinidad area was the best possible site for landing of a Cuban insurgent force.

b. Concept of the Trinidad Operation. The concept of the operation as developed by the Paramilitary Staff during January 1961, is contained in Enclosure (2).

c. Evaluation of the Plan and of the Force by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(1) A team of officers of the Joint Staff headed by Brigadier General D. W. Gray, U. S. Army, evaluated the complete operation plan for Trinidad during the period 31 January to 6 February 1961. This evaluation resulted in a favorable assessment of this plan by the Joint Chiefs of

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Staff. Reference (a) is a report by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on their evaluation of the plan.

(2) The report mentioned above recommended evaluation of the invasion force by a team of officers representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This was done at the training base in Guatemala in late February and resulted in a favorable evaluation of the force's combat capabilities. Reference (b) is the Joint Chiefs of Staff report of this evaluation.

d. Major Features of the Plan:

(1) Plan for Landing. The landing plan provided for simultaneous landing at first light on D-Day of two reinforced rifle companies of approximately 200 men each over two beaches southwest of Trinidad and the parachute landing of a company of equal strength immediately north of Trinidad. The remainder of the force was to land over one of the two beaches in successive trips of landing craft.

(2) Naval Gunfire. Two LCI each mounting eleven 50 caliber machine guns and two 75mm recoilless rifles were to provide naval gunfire support at the beaches.

(3) Tactical Air Operations. The plan provided for a maximum effort surprise strike (15 B-26) at dawn of D-1 on all Cuban military airfields followed by repeated strikes at dusk of the same day and at first light of D-Day against any airfields where offensive aircraft were yet operational. Immediate post strike photography was provided for in the plan. Tank, artillery, and truck concentrations known to be at Managua were also to be attacked on D-1 as were the Havana power plants, in order to deprive the capital of power and interrupt communications. Naval craft in or near the objective area were also to be attacked. On D-Day, a beach strafe and a bombing, strafing attack on the parachute drop zone were also planned as well as attacks on three key bridges. Armed reconnaissance and all approach roads throughout D-Day and thereafter was also to be provided. The first and primary objective of planned air action was to eliminate

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completely all opposing tactical aircraft.

(4) Scheme of Maneuver. The landing force was to seize and defend terrain features east, north and west of Trinidad dominating all approaches to the area. If unable to hold the beachhead, the force was to withdraw to the northwest into the Escambray Mountains to continue operations as a powerful guerrilla force supplied by air.

11. POSITION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE IN REGARD TO THE TRINIDAD PLAN.

a. The Secretary of State and the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs consistently opposed the Trinidad Plan on the grounds that the operation would have the appearance of a U. S. World War II invasion and would be too obviously attributable to the United States. These officials expressed the opinion that execution of the Trinidad Plan would cause reactions adverse to the United States in Latin American and in the United Nations, and would possibly cause counter-moves by the Sino-Soviet Bloc in Laos, Berlin or elsewhere. Mr. Rusk on one occasion stated that the possibility of air attack by Castro forces against the United States could not be discounted.

b. Secretary Rusk and Assistant Secretary Mann objected in particular to the conduct of any tactical air operations. Mr. Mann took the position that there could be no tactical air operations unless the tactical aircraft were actually based on Cuban soil. He proposed on one occasion that a landing be made in Oriente Province without air support and that an airfield be built by the landing force to receive tactical aircraft, whereupon air operations could commence.

12. REJECTION OF THE TRINIDAD PLAN. After careful consideration of the Trinidad Plan, the President decided on or about 11 March 1961 that it should not be executed, and directed that possible alternative methods of employing the Cuban forces be studied. It was the understanding of the C.I.A. officials concerned that any alternate plan produced should have the following characteristics:

a. The landing should be made in a more quiet manner, preferably at night, and should not give the appearance

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of a World War II type amphibious assault. It was desired that the operation insofar as possible appear as an uprising from within Cuba rather than an invasion.

b. It would be necessary to seize an airfield capable of supporting B-26 operations, to which any tactical air operations conducted could be attributed. No tactical air operations were to be conducted until such a field had been seized.

13. THE STUDY OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATE LANDING AREAS.

a. During the period 13 to 15 March 1961, the Paramilitary Staff, pursuant to verbal instructions from the Deputy Director (Plans), conducted an intensive study of possible alternate areas in which a landing could be made in such a way as to satisfy the limiting requirements mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The entire littoral of Cuba was again examined in the search for an airstrip capable of supporting B-26 operations, which could be seized and defended by the Cuban assault force. In particular, the Provinces of Oriente, Pinar del Rio, Las Villas and Matanzas were examined, and the Isle of Pines was re-studied. As a result of this study, the Paramilitary Staff concluded that the only airstrips in all Cuba capable of supporting B-26 operations which the Cuban force could have any hope of seizing and holding were the Soplillar field and a new field at Playa Giron, both in the eastern half of the Zapata Peninsula of Central Cuba.

b. In accordance with the instructions of the Deputy Director (Plans), three concepts for possible operations were drawn up. These concepts, which in the short time available for preparation (about three days) could be developed only to the extent of sketching a tentative scheme of maneuver on an operations map and preparing brief notes, were based on the following areas:

- (1) The Preston area on the north coast of Oriente Province.
- (2) The south coast of Las Villas between Trinidad and Cienfuegos.
- (3) The Eastern Zapata area near Cochinos Bay.

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c. It was recognized by the Paramilitary Staff that the first two concepts mentioned above did not satisfy the requirements for a B-26 airfield, and therefore could not have been executed within established policy parameters unless attempted entirely without air support. The Paramilitary Staff advised higher authority within C.I.A. at this time, as it had consistently done in the past, that no amphibious operation could be conducted without control of the air and adequate tactical air support.

d. These three concepts were evaluated by General Gray's group from the Joint Staff. Their assessment, as approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was that of the three alternatives evaluated, the Zapata concept was best, but that none of the three alternatives was as militarily feasible or likely to accomplish the objective as the Trinidad plan. Reference (c) is the report of this evaluation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

e. The Paramilitary Staff recommended the Zapata Plan to the Deputy Director (Plans) as being the best of the three alternatives, and the only one of these which offered any possibility of conducting tactical air operations within the limits of established policy. The Deputy Director (Plans) was advised, however, that some way would have to be devised to knock out Castro's air force before this or any other landing was attempted.

14. THE AIR FORCE DEFECTION PLAN.

a. In an effort to find some way acceptable to the Department of State and to the President in which air attacks could be conducted for the purpose of destroying the Castro air force, the undersigned with Mr. Bissell and his assistant, Mr. Barnes, developed a plan along the following lines:

(1) Prior to D-Day, a B-26 aircraft painted with Castro air force markings would be flown to Miami by a Cuban who would land soon after dawn and represent himself as a defecting pilot of Castro's air force. He would state that he, with certain companions, had executed a defection plot, and had attacked other aircraft on the fields from which they had flown.

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(2) At dawn on the day of the defection, B-26 aircraft would attack the three principal military airfields in Cuba, where all fighters and bombers were believed to be located as a result of photographic reconnaissance. A limitation on numbers of aircraft to be employed was imposed by the Deputy Director (Plans), who reasoned that the Department of State would not accept a plan involving a larger number of aircraft than could reasonably be attributed to the defection plot. He decided to propose that a total of six aircraft be employed, with two attacking each of three principal fields, Campo Libertad, San Antonio de los Banos, and Santiago. The total number was later raised to eight on recommendation of the undersigned.

b. It was believed that this attack, followed by dawn attacks on D-Day against these and all other military airfields, would have a good chance of destroying all of Castro's operable fighters and bombers, which were believed (correctly) to number no more than from fifteen to eighteen.

15. THE DIVERSION PLAN.

a. The desirability of conducting a diversionary landing in an area remote from the main landing had long been recognized by the Paramilitary Staff. However, sufficient troops for this purpose could not be raised, it appeared, except at the expense of the main landing force which had not yet reached desired strength. A development in Miami in late March 1961, provided an opportunity to raise a small diversionary force. Nino Diaz, a Cuban exile leader in Miami, expressed a desire to lead a small force composed of his immediate followers into Cuba. It was decided to send Diaz and 170 men to the recently acquired training base at Belle Chase, New Orleans, where they could be organized, equipped and given minimal training. This was done in great haste, and the company was formed at Belle Chase over a period of about two weeks prior to its embarkation for the operation.

b. Arrangements were made by the Forward Operating Base in Miami for a Cuban vessel to lift Diaz's group to the objective. The plan provided for staging Diaz through the Naval Air Station at Key West and loading the force out of Stock Island in the Florida Keys.

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c. A beach 30 miles east of Guantanamo was selected for the Diaz landing. A C.I.A. paramilitary team with ten men and a radio operator were operating in this area, and this team was to be instructed to act as a reception party for Diaz at the beach. This team was in contact with a 100 man guerrilla group operating in the mountains adjacent to the landing area, and it was planned that Diaz would join forces with this group. Diaz was known to have a large political following in Oriente Province.

16. THE FINAL OPERATIONAL CONCEPT SUBMITTED TO THE PRESIDENT.

a. The final concept submitted to the President in late March 1961, provided for:

(1) The defection operation, combined with surprise dawn air attacks on D-2 against the three principal military airfields. No more than two aircraft were to be visible at any one place at one time.

(2) The landing of the Diaz group east of Guantanamo during the night of D-2.

(3) The landing of the main force at three widely separated landing points in Eastern Zapata during the early morning hours of D-Day. The landing was to be followed by air attacks on airfields and other military targets at dawn of D-Day, by which time the airfield in the objective area was expected to be in friendly hands. These D-Day air attacks were to be represented, if necessary, as coming from the field seized in Zapata, although plans provided for having only two B-26 aircraft operate from that field, while the remainder of the air force was to continue operations from Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

b. The President directed that all preparations for the operation, including the staging and embarkation of troops, should continue, but that actual execution of the operation would be subject to his final decision twenty-four hours before scheduled commencement. The President also directed that plans be formulated for diversion of the ships with troops embarked in the event that he should decide to cancel the operation. Pursuant to these instructions, C.I.A. planned to divert the ships, if required, to New Orleans or to Vieques, Puerto Rico, where the force would be disbanded in increments.

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17. SUCCESSIVE DELAYS OF D-DAY.

a. The date originally selected by the Paramilitary Staff for execution of the Trinidad landing was 4 March 1961. This date was chosen on the basis of the following factors:

(1) The Government of Guatemala had expressed its desire to have the Cuban force removed from that country not later than 1 March.

(2) It was desired to execute the operation at the earliest possible date in view of the rapid military build-up in Cuba. Great quantities of military equipment, including field artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, and tanks, had been delivered to Cuba by the Soviet Bloc, and it was estimated that Castro's forces, under the tutelage of Bloc advisors, would soon achieve proficiency in the use of this equipment. It was also estimated that Castro could acquire a jet air capability by April, 1961. Unconfirmed reports were received indicating that crated MIG aircraft had been delivered, and by April, 1961 Cuban pilots known to be in Czechoslovakia would have had time to complete jet training.

(3) It was desired to land in the Trinidad area before guerrilla forces operating in the adjacent Escambray Mountains could be eliminated by Castro's ever-increasing pressure against them.

(4) The night of 4 March provided suitable conditions of moonlight to facilitate operations in the transport area in preparation for the landing at dawn.

b. After rejection of the Trinidad Plan, the Paramilitary Staff recommended 3 April 1961, as D-Day for the landing in Zapata. Moon conditions would again be favorable at that time, and 3 April appeared to be the earliest date by which necessary operation and administrative plans could be prepared and other necessary preparations made for the Zapata operation. This date proved to be unacceptable, however, since it coincided with a planned visit to the United States by the Prime Minister of Great Britain. In view of this visit, the President did not

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desire to conduct the operation before 10 April. That date was accordingly programmed, although it was made clear to all concerned by the Paramilitary Staff that the lack of adequate moonlight would increase the difficulty of the night landing. Later, D-Day was again postponed until 17 April in order, it was understood, to allow observation of further developments in the Laos situation and in the United Nations with regard to Cuban charges against the United States. The night of 16-17 April would be in the new moon phase with no moonlight.

18. FORCES AVAILABLE FOR THE ZAPATA OPERATION.

a. Ground Forces (1,511 men)

(1) The Cuban Brigade included:

- (a) Headquarters and Service Company - 156
- (b) Heavy Weapons Company - 114
- (c) Five Infantry companies - 175 (each)
- (d) One Airborne Infantry Company - 177
- (e) Tank Platoon - 24
(These men were trained in a highly secure and satisfactory manner at Fort Knox.)
- (f) Boat Operator Section - 36
- (g) Intelligence/Reconnaissance Company - 68
- (h) Surgical Team - 18
- (i) Supernumeraries - 43

(2) Major items of equipment included: 108 Browning Automatic Rifles; 49 30 caliber machine guns; 14 50 caliber machine guns; 22 60mm mortars; 20 81mm mortars; 7 4.2" mortars; 18 57mm recoilless rifles; 4 75mm recoilless rifles; 47 3.5" rocket

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launchers; 9 flamethrowers; 5 M41 tanks; 12 2½ ton trucks; one 3,000 gallon aviation gasoline tanker truck; one tractor crane; one dozer; 2 400 gallon water trailers; 11 ½ ton trucks and 9 ¼ ton tractors.

b. Air Forces. The Cuban Air Force, based at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, included fifteen B-26 light bombers, ten C-54 transports and five C-46 transports.

c. Sea Forces. Sea forces included:

(1) Two LCI, each mounting eleven 50 caliber machine guns and two 75mm recoilless rifles. (These craft were for use primarily as command and naval gunfire vessels, although each carried a 1000 man paramilitary pack in its hold). Each LCI carried two high-speed boats.

(2) Three LCU, each mounting two 50 caliber machine guns.

(3) Four LCVP, each mounting a 50 caliber machine gun.

*(4) Seven chartered commercial freighters (average 2,000 tons).

*NOTE: Freighters in the assault mounted two to three 50 caliber machine guns. Only four of these ships were to participate in the assault phase. The additional ships were loaded with follow-up supplies for both ground and air forces.

(5) One 165 foot Cuban coastal steamer.

19. MAJOR FEATURES OF THE ZAPATA PLAN.

a. Staging and Embarkation. The plan provided for airlifting Brigade troops less the airborne company, under cover of darkness, from Guatemala to Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, during three successive nights. Upon arrival, troops were to be moved immediately to the Puerto Cabezas dock near the airfield for embarkation before dawn. Supplies were pre-loaded in assault shipping at New Orleans prior to proceeding to Nicaragua.

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b. Movement to the Objective. Ships of the task force were to proceed independently over separate tracks in order not to give the appearance of a convoy, and were to arrive at a rendezvous point about forty miles off the Cuban coast at 1730 in the afternoon of D-1. From this point they were to proceed in column under cover of darkness to the transport area 5,000 yards off the beach, making rendezvous at this point at 2300 with the U. S. Navy LSD lifting the three pre-loaded LCU and four LCVP. One transport, escorted by an LCI, was to continue independently into Cochinos Bay for landing troops at the head of the Bay. As a deception measure, two United Fruit Company ships were hired to enter Puerto Cabezas harbor during the night the assault shipping sailed. The presence of these ships plus the one follow-up Garcia vessel lying off the harbor would, it was hoped, conceal the fact that the operation had been launched. This deception was apparently successful, for available intelligence indicates that Castro was not aware that an invasion force had left Nicaragua until after the landing.

c. The Plan for Landing. The plan provided for landings, commencing at 0200 17 April, at three widely separated beaches as follows:

(1) Red Beach. (Head of Cochinos Bay; left flank of beachhead). Two reinforced infantry companies, about 400 men, were to land from one transport at this beach, utilizing six 19 foot and four 14 foot aluminum craft with outboard motors.

(2) Blue Beach (Playa Giron; center of the beachhead; about 18 miles from Red Beach). The main body, about 700 men, including two infantry companies, the heavy weapons company less detachments, the headquarters and service company, tank platoon and motor transport platoon, were to land here utilizing LCI's, LCVP's and eighteen 19 foot aluminum boats from three transports. Reserve supplies (10 days) were to be unloaded at this beach.

(3) Green Beach (Right flank of the beachhead; about 18 miles east of Blue Beach). One reinforced company, about 200 men, was to land at this beach from an LCI utilizing one LCVP and the two launches available in the LCI.

d. Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) Plan. UDT swimmers were to reconnoiter and mark each beach with lights prior to the landing of troops.

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e. Naval Gunfire. One LCI, mounting eleven 50 caliber machine guns, five 30 caliber machine guns and two 75mm recoilless rifles, was to support the landing at Red Beach, while the second similarly armed craft was to support at Blue Beach prior to departing that area for the purpose of landing troops on Green Beach to the east.

f. Airborne Landing. The airborne company was to land at dawn by parachute from five C-46 aircraft in five drop zones for the purpose of sealing off the roads crossing the Zapata swamp into the beachhead area from the north.

g. Scheme of Maneuver.

(1) The beachhead area consisted of a belt of dry, scrub-covered land, about forty miles in length from east to west and from three to six miles in width, separated from the interior of Cuba by a vast swamp impassable to foot troops. The only approaches to the beachhead from the interior of Cuba consisted of three roads crossing the swamp from the north, and a coastal road leading to the east flank of the beachhead from Cienfuegos. Movement off the roads in the swamp area was impossible, while the coastal road from the east led through a narrow strip of land between the swamp and the sea.

(2) The scheme of maneuver was designed to seize and defend positions dominating the exposed, canalized routes across the swamp and blocking entry into the beachhead at the narrow neck of dry land at the east flank. Outposts beyond the swamp on the three roads leading from the north were to be dropped by parachute.

h. Air Plan.

(1) Dawn attacks on D-Day were planned against all airfields revealed by photography to have fighters or bombers still operational after the surprise attacks on D-2. Attacks were also to be launched at dawn on naval craft in or near the objective area and against other military targets. Two B-26 aircraft, after completing their attacks, were to land on the airfield near Blue Beach and continue flying interdiction and

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support missions, using ordnance which was to be promptly landed over the beach by an advance aviation party and fuel from the 3,000 tanker to be landed early from an LCU. All available aircraft were to phase back to the beachhead in afternoon sorties for interdiction, close support and other attacks as necessary.

(2) Enclosure (3) is the target list for D-Day extracted from the Zapata plan. Some of these targets were removed from the target list at the last moment in view of the injunction from higher authority that air attacks on D-Day would have to be more limited. The targets removed from the list were: Managua Military Base (where tanks and artillery were parked); Playa Baracoa Air Base (used mainly by helicopters and transports); Bauta International Broadcasting Station; Topes de Collantes Military Base. (Succeeding paragraphs describing the actual operation, will show that none of these attacks planned for D-Day were carried out as a result of orders from higher authority.)

i. Communication.

(1) The internal radio communication system of the Brigade was similar to that of a reinforced United States infantry unit of similar size, but was more extensive in amounts of equipment and number of nets employed. Portable radios with a voice range of 30 miles were used for communication between Brigade Headquarters and the various companies of the Brigade. Nets for tactical and administrative purposes, mortar spotting and air-ground control were provided.

(2) For communication with Headquarters in the United States and the air base in Nicaragua, the Brigade was equipped with two communication trailers which were to be landed from two separate ships. In addition, it was provided with six man-portable sets (RS-1) capable of communication with Headquarters in the United States or Nicaragua. Mechanical cipher equipment and one-time pads were available for encryption and decryption.

(3) The command ship and alternate command ship (LCI's) had direct CW radio links with the United States and Nicaragua, and voice nets for naval command, boat control, and

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ship-to-shore liaison and logistical purposes. The Brigade Commander could relay messages to the United States or Nicaragua through either of these ships.

(4) Each troop transport was provided with a direct radio circuit to the United States and Nicaragua.

j. Supplies.

(1) Assault Shipping.

(a) The equivalent of two basic loads of ammunition for all units was deck loaded aboard the transports lifting the units concerned. Individuals were to land with three days emergency-type rations and all the ammunition they could carry.

(b) Seven 2½ ton trucks, lifted in the three LCU, were pre-loaded with ammunition of all types.

(c) Paramilitary arms packs (arms, field equipment and limited ammunition for outfitting guerrilla forces) were available in assault shipping (2 LCI; ATLANTICO) for 4,000 men.

(d) Ten days supply of Classes I, III and V was loaded in the holds of one of the assault ships (RIO ESCONDIDO).

(2) Follow-up Shipping.

(a) One transport (LAKE CHARLES) with ten days of supply, Classes I, III and V, was scheduled to arrive at the objective area on the morning of D+2 from Nicaragua.

(b) A second follow-up ship (ORATAVA) with twenty days supplies, Class I, III and V, for the landing force, was to be on call in the Caribbean Sea south of Cuba. This ship, in addition to the above, carried 21,000 bulk rations, medical supplies, aviation gasoline and 30 days aviation ordnance for the entire Cuban air force.

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(c) A third follow-up ship (LA PLAYA) with arms and ammunition for 15,000 men, plus vehicles, communication equipment, medical supplies and POL was also to be on call south of Cuba.

(3) Air Delivery.

(a) Three days supply of Classes I, III and V were available at the airfield at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, for air landing or parachute delivery.

(b) Paramilitary arms packs for 3,000 men were available for air delivery at three airfields in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Opa Locka.

(4) Additional Backup. Arms, equipment and supplies for 15,000 men were positioned by the Defense Department at Anniston, Alabama, as additional backup. Sufficient of the above for 2,000 men was prepared for air drop.

k. Evacuation.

(1) Establishment of a rear medical facility for receipt of casualties evacuated from the objective area was a problem which defied solution until a few days before execution of the operation. Authority could not be obtained for use of a facility in the United States. There were no usable facilities at bases in Guatemala or Nicaragua, and, in any event, the governments of those countries did not wish to have Cuban casualties evacuated there.

(2) Finally, it was decided that the Department of Defense would establish a field hospital at Vieques, Puerto Rico, to be operational by D+5. This plan was abandoned, however, and it was agreed in the end that casualties would be evacuated by air or sea to Ramey Air Force Base, Puerto Rico.

20. EXECUTION OF THE OPERATION. A summary of the more significant events of the actual operation is recorded in following paragraphs.

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21. AIR STRIKES ON D-2 (15 APRIL 1961).

a. The purpose of these strikes was to destroy Castro's tactical aircraft, all of which were believed from photographic interpretation to be based at San Antonio, Campo Libertad and Santiago. Three B-26 were programmed against each of the first two of these fields and two against the third. Each aircraft carried ten 250 pound fragmentation bombs, eight 5 inch rockets and full ammunition for eight 50 caliber machine guns.

b. The attack was executed at dawn, as planned. Returning pilots reported destruction of 50 percent of tactical aircraft at Campo Libertad, 75 percent at San Antonio and 100 percent at Santiago. The readout of photography taken immediately after the strike indicated that pilot reports were optimistic, and a conservative estimate was that only about 50 percent of Castro's original tactical air force of 15 to 18 serviceable aircraft had been knocked out.

c. Antiaircraft fire from 50 caliber and 12.7mm guns was reported as heavy at Campo Libertad and San Antonio. One friendly aircraft was disabled and crashed in the sea north of Havana. Two other aircraft landed at friendly bases low on fuel. The aircraft and crews were recovered.

22. THE DIVERSION OPERATION.

a. The Diaz Group of 170 men was staged and embarked on schedule and proceeded to its objective area thirty miles east of Guantanamo in the Cuban coastal vessel (SANTA ANA) chartered for the operation. The Group failed to land during the night of 14/15 April as planned, however, reporting that difficulty had been encountered in finding the beach and the reconnaissance boat and two rubber landing craft had been lost.

b. Prior to launching the Diaz operation, the radio man and several other members of the ten-man C.I.A. team which was to meet Diaz at the beach were wounded in an accident with a hand grenade, and Headquarters contact with the intended reception party was lost.

c. Upon learning of Diaz's failure to land, Headquarters ordered him to land on the following night, but again he failed to do so giving a number of excuses. The undersigned

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decided at this time that the real reason for not landing was a failure of leadership, and it was believed that Diaz would never land as ordered. Accordingly, he was instructed to proceed to Zapata where he was to join the main force. Diaz did not immediately comply with these sailing instructions, but eventually reached the Zapata area too late for the operation.

d. This abortive effort illustrated one truth in regard to the entire operation -- the forces involved were composed of volunteer foreign nationals, all based, with the exception of Diaz's group, in countries outside the United States, and consequently the United States exercised no legal authority over them. All the Cuban forces except Diaz's, however, voluntarily complied with all instructions issued by C.I.A. Headquarters.

23. THE AMPHIBIOUS/AIRBORNE OPERATION AT ZAPATA.

a. Embarkation and Movement to the Objective.

(1) These operations were smoothly executed according to plan. (See paragraph 19.) The ships formed column at the planned place and time and made rendezvous on schedule at 2300 with the Navy LSD carrying the three LCU and four LCVP, about 5,000 yards off Blue Beach (Playa Giron). The transport HOUSTON, led by the radar-equipped LCI BARBARA J, proceeded onward into Cochinos Bay enroute to Red Beach.

(2) There is no evidence to indicate that the Cuban Government was aware of the approach of this force until the landing was commenced.

b. Cancellation of the Air Attacks Against Cuban Military Airfields and Other Targets Planned for 0540R on D-Day. (See paragraph 19h.)

(1) At about 2215 on the night of 16 April, I was informed at the Command Post by Mr. Esterline, the Project Chief, that these attacks had been cancelled by order of the President on recommendation of the Department of State. Upon hearing this, I immediately telephoned Mr. Bissell, the Deputy Director (Plans), who was at the Department of State, and

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urged in the strongest terms that the President be immediately requested to reconsider this decision and that the possible disastrous consequences of cancelling these attacks be explained to him. I offered the prediction at this time that shipping, with the essential supplies on board, would be sunk, possibly to the last ship, on the following day, since it was known that Castro still possessed a dangerous fighter and bomber capability. I stated also at this time that if the decision to cancel the air attacks had been communicated to the Command Post a few hours earlier, I would have strongly urged that the shipping be withdrawn without attempting to land the troops. But as it was, the ships were already closely approaching the transport area off the beaches, and by the time a message could reach them, the landing operations would be underway.

(2) Mr. Bissell, and General Cabell, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, conferred with Secretary of State Rusk about the matter, but did not see the President. It is my understanding that Secretary Rusk, after talking with General Cabell and Mr. Bissell, telephoned the President and recommended that the decision to cancel the air attacks remain unchanged. The President accepted this recommendation.

(3) After it was learned at the Command Post that the decision had not been changed, a message was sent to the task force at 0149 warning that Castro's air force had not been destroyed. The task force was ordered to expedite unloading during the night and to sail all transports, except the RIO ESCONDIDO, to the south at best speed. The RIO ESCONDIDO was to remain at Blue Beach to continue unloading its vital reserve supplies under protection of the guns of the two LCI, BARBARA J and BLAGAR.

c. D-Day Operations at Blue Beach (17 April).

(1) UDT Reconnaissance. A reconnaissance boat with UDT personnel and the C.I.A. operations officer from the Command Ship BLAGAR, Mr. Lynch, landed at Blue Beach shortly after midnight and marked the beach with lights. A coral reef

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about one-foot beneath the surface was discovered about 100 yards off the beach. Members of the UDT team were forced to fire on a jeep which approached their position. Three trucks promptly arrived carrying troops who engaged in a fire fight with Lynch and his party. Lynch called for fire support from the BLAGAR, which closed to 400 yards and drove all opposition from the beach in ten minutes of firing. Lynch then called for troops to land.

(2) Landing of Troops.

(a) Troops commenced landing at 0100. There was no opposition in the immediate beach area, but about one hundred militia were encountered in the town of Playa Giron immediately inland. Seventy of these were captured, and the remainder fled leaving their weapons behind. Troops continued to land without serious opposition.

(b) At daylight, a channel through the coral reef was located and marked, and LCU's began to land vehicles at 0600.

(3) Enemy Air Attacks. Enemy air attacks against the invasion force commenced at 0630 and continued all day. B-26, Sea Fury (and T-33 aircraft participated in the attacks, with no more than two aircraft appearing at any one time during the day. The BLAGAR shot down one Sea Fury and two B-26 (assisted in one of these kills by a friendly B-26).

(4) In view of the enemy air attacks, the Brigade Commander decided to land troops scheduled for Green Beach with the main body at Blue Beach, thus avoiding the danger of loss at sea. By 0825, all troops, vehicles and tanks were ashore at Blue Beach.

(5) Loss of RIO ESCONDIDO. This ship, with ten days reserve supplies on board was sunk by enemy air attack at 0930. All crew members were rescued.

(6) Enemy air attacks against the ships continued as they withdrew to the south.

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d. Operations at Red Beach.

(1) UDT Reconnaissance. Mr. Robertson, the C.I.A. operations officer with the LCI BARBARA J, led a UDT team to Red Beach shortly after 0100 on 17 April and marked the beach. The reconnaissance party silenced enemy automatic weapons fire coming from the left flank.

(2) Landing of Troops. Troops commenced landing without opposition, but encountered fifty militia immediately inland, forty of whom were captured. Several trucks which approached the beach within the first half hour were successfully attacked and driven off by gunfire from the BARBARA J. Captured militiamen offered to fight against Castro.

(3) Loss of the HOUSTON. The HOUSTON was hit by rockets from enemy aircraft at 0630, and beached on the west side of Cochinos Bay. One infantry company, less its weapons platoon, was still on board. These men, with the ship's crew, went ashore but never reached the Red Beach area.

(4) One enemy B-26 was shot down by machine gun fire from the UDT boat.

(5) Combat Action. At about 1000, about 500 to 600 militia attacked the Red Beach force from the north and were driven off with heavy casualties. Tanks accompanying this force were either destroyed or stopped by friendly aircraft. A tank and two ammunition trucks arrived from Blue Beach in time for action against the next attack at 1400 by an estimated 1,500 militia. These troops, who arrived in open trucks and semi-trailers, were ambushed by the Red Beach force, employing the tank, 57mm recoilless rifles, 3.5" rocket launchers, machine guns, and other available weapons. Enemy troops were caught by this fire before they could dismount, and friendly survivors have estimated that fifty percent of these enemy troops were killed or wounded. The next attack came in the evening and lasted all night. Five enemy tanks were knocked out by the Red Beach force during the night.

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(6) The BARBARA J was strafed by an enemy Sea Fury during the day, and two engines were disabled. A near miss with rockets opened her seams slightly and she began taking water.

(7) Retirement to Blue Beach. On the morning of D+1, the Red Beach force, being almost out of ammunition, retired in good order to Blue Beach, utilizing captured trucks, and took up positions in the Blue Beach perimeter. They were not pressed by the enemy during this retirement.

(8) Cooperation of Civilians. Forty civilians in the Red Beach area volunteered to assist the invasion force and were employed as truck drivers and laborers.

e. Airborne Landing. The airborne company landed in all but one of five scheduled drop zones at 0730. Light resistance was encountered. Little is known of further actions by the airborne company, except that the force which landed north of Blue Beach held positions successfully until D+2, the final day of the operation.

f. Continued Action at Blue Beach.

(1) Air Supply. During the night of 17/18 April one C-54 drop of ammunition was made at Red Beach and three C-54 drops at Blue Beach. Three C-54 drops were made at Blue Beach during the following night, but only two were received.

(2) Combat Action. Reports have indicated that the Blue Beach area was quiet during the morning of D+1, but the enemy attacked from west, north and east in the afternoon, employing tanks, artillery, and aircraft. The battle continued throughout the night of 18/19 April.

(3) Attempt to Land Supplies. Orders were issued from Headquarters for ammunition and supplies to be offloaded from the transports CARIBE and ATLANTICO into the three LCU which were to be escorted to the beach during the night of 18/19 April. The LCU's were not able to rendezvous with these transports until the evening of 18 April. The LCU's were loaded and the run to the beach was commenced, but the BLAGAR

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reported that due to the slow speed of the LCU's, the craft could not arrive at the beach until after daylight. Enemy fighters by this time were over the beach continuously during daylight hours, and it was considered a certainty that the craft would be sunk before they could reach the beach to unload. Accordingly, the mission was cancelled by Headquarters, and instructions for air supply during the night were issued to the air base in Nicaragua.

(4) Evacuation Attempt. A message was sent to the Brigade Commander on 18 April stating that ships and craft would be moved to Blue Beach to evacuate troops that night if he so recommended. He replied that he would never be evacuated. At 1300 on 19 April, the two LCI and three LCU headed for the beach, in accordance with orders from Headquarters, to evacuate troops, but the convoy reversed course upon learning that the beachhead had fallen.

(5) Final Day of Battle (19 April). The enemy continued to press Blue Beach from three sides with tanks, infantry and artillery during the day. In the morning, a counter attack was launched to the west along the coastal road by about 90 men and two tanks. The tanks returned later in damaged condition, but the infantry force was not heard from again. In the course of the day's battle, ammunition supplies were exhausted, and at about 1600 in the afternoon organized resistance ceased. Survivors have stated that the lines did not collapse until all ammunition was expended.

g. Summary of Friendly Air Action.

(1) D-Day.

(a) Eleven B-26 were phased over the beachhead for close support and interdiction during the day. These aircraft attacked ground targets, sank a patrol escort ship (3 inch gun) near the Isle of Pines, and one aircraft attacked the airfield at Cienfuegos. Only three of these eleven aircraft returned to base. Four were shot down, while the remaining four landed at other friendly bases. Some of these four aircraft, and all the crews, were returned to base late the next day.

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(b) Four new B-26 arrived at Nicaragua from the United States that night. During the night, three B-26 were launched against the San Antonio airfield where D-Day photography had revealed the opposing aircraft were based. This mission was unsuccessful due to haze and poor visibility.

(2) D-1.

(a) Five aircraft flew missions over the beachhead during the morning and attacked ground targets.

(b) In the afternoon, a highly successful attack was launched by six aircraft (two flown by Americans) against a 20-mile-long truck and tank column approaching Blue Beach from the west. Several tanks and about twenty large troop-laden lorries were destroyed by napalm, bombs, rockets and machine gun fire. (It is noteworthy that an enemy report intercepted on this date indicated that he had already suffered 1,800 casualties, mostly from air attack.)

(c) This column was attacked again during the night by six B-26.

(d) Four additional new aircraft reached the base in Nicaragua during the night.

(3) D-2.

(a) Five aircraft (four with American crews) were sent in early morning sorties over the beachhead. Three, including two piloted by Americans, were shot down by T-33's. Additional sorties were flown during the morning as aircraft could be readied.

(4) It is estimated that only three enemy T-33 and two Sea Furies were left in action after D-Day. These fighters were sufficient, however, to keep almost continuous cover over the beachhead, making it almost suicidal to attempt operations in the area with B-26 aircraft, which were virtually helpless against fighter attack.

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(5) It seems reasonable to conclude that the attacks on military airfields originally programmed for 0540 on D-Day, but which had to be cancelled, would have had an excellent chance of eliminating Castro's offensive air capability or of reducing it to ineffectiveness. If this had been done, friendly B-26 operations could have been maintained over the beachhead area and the approaches thereto continuously during the day, and ships could have unloaded the supplies needed to sustain the Brigade. This could have turned the tide of battle, since Castro's road-bound truck columns proved highly vulnerable when friendly B-26 were able to locate them, and the Brigade, itself, was not defeated until its ammunition supplies were exhausted.

24. RESCUE OPERATIONS. Mr. Robertson and Mr. Lynch, with five Cuban UDT men, operated from United States destroyers for several days after collapse of the beachhead and rescued twenty-six survivors from the coastal area west of Cochinos Bay.

25. INTELLIGENCE FACTORS.

a. The ultimate success of strike operations against Cuba in causing the overthrow of Castro depended upon the precipitation by these operations of large-scale uprisings among the people of Cuba and widespread revolt within the ranks of Castro's armed forces. The invasion force was never intended to overthrow Castro by itself, and no representations were ever made by the Central Intelligence Agency that the force had such a potential.

b. There was much evidence from available intelligence sources, including agent reports and debriefing of persons recently coming out of Cuba, to indicate that the country was ripe for revolt. An analysis of actual and potential anti-Castro resistance in Cuba made by the Paramilitary Staff in March 1961 is contained in enclosure (4). After this was written, reliable intelligence was received indicating that the entire Cuban Navy was plotting a revolt, which was to take place at about the same time as the planned invasion.

c. The low estimate by the Paramilitary Staff of the fighting qualities and potential of Castro's militia was

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based upon accurate knowledge of militia performance against guerrilla forces in the Escambray Mountains over a period of six months. Some of the guerrilla leaders from the Escambray were exfiltrated and debriefed by the Central Intelligence Agency after resistance in these mountains collapsed. There can be no question of the fact that the militia performed very poorly in the Escambray, and demonstrated low morale, lack of efficiency and a marked reluctance to close in decisive combat even with small, poorly armed guerrilla forces. The guerrilla forces in the Escambray were reduced by seige, which cut off food supplies, and not by direct combat.

d. The military proficiency demonstrated by the militia at Zapata indicated that great progress had been made in integrating Bloc equipment and in the training of Castro's hard-core Communist followers during the early months of 1961. There was also reason to suspect that militia operations were being directed by European military personnel. The tactics employed were Communist-style, and enemy voice transmissions in a strange tongue, not Spanish, were intercepted by the Brigade. Intelligence indicates that these "elite" militia forces suffered extremely heavy casualties during the three days of fighting, and they were not able to overcome the Brigade until the latter was out of ammunition as a result of our inability to supply the force against the opposition of Castro's five remaining fighter aircraft. It would seem reasonable to conclude that if the Castro Air Force had been eliminated at the beginning so that uninterrupted unloading of supplies could proceed at the beach and our B-26 aircraft could operate effectively, the Brigade would have had an excellent chance of breaking the hard-core militia, which obviously was what Castro used in the battle. Casualties in the number being experienced by the militia (estimated 3,000 to 4,000) could not have been sustained more than a few more days without collapse. The breaking of the hard-core militia would probably have been the signal for revolt of the Rebel Army and remaining elements of the militia, who were known to be of dubious loyalty to Castro. In this regard, it is significant that the 150 militia prisoners captured by the Brigade offered to fight against Castro, and the majority of able-bodied male civilians in the invasion area did likewise. It is also

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significant that no known Rebel Army units participated in the battle, indicating Castro's lack of faith in their loyalty. It is also significant that Castro's Navy did nothing of importance against the invasion force.

e. The theory that uprisings and revolt would be triggered did not receive an adequate test in the operation. Agents throughout Cuba were warned shortly before the invasion to make all preparations for action, but the exact invasion area and timing could not be revealed to them in view of the known propensity of all Cubans to tell secrets. There was also a possibility that one or more agents would, unknown to us, be doubled (controlled by the enemy). It would not be reasonable to expect revolts to develop within a period of two or three days which turned out to be the extent of life of the invasion force, nor could revolt be expected until the invasion force had demonstrated that it had a good chance of enduring on Cuban soil. There is conclusive evidence that Castro feared revolt in the fact that he promptly arrested 30,000 persons throughout Cuba. One C.I.A. agent reported that 2,500 men had requested arms from him immediately after the invasion took place, but the invasion did not last long enough to permit supply of arms.

26. POLICY RESTRICTIONS WHICH LIMITED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARAMILITARY OPERATIONS.

a. The most significant policy restrictions which hampered the preparation for and conduct of effective paramilitary operations are listed below.

(1) The restriction prohibiting use of bases in the United States for training paramilitary forces. (Adequate training base could not be obtained in other countries.)

(2) The restriction prohibiting use of an air base in the United States for logistical overflights in support of guerrilla forces and of the strike force when landed. (The Guatemalan base was the only base available for several months, until Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, was put into use shortly before

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the invasion in April 1961. Both were too distant from the target for effective, large-scale logistical flights with the aircraft available (C-54 and C-46). Missions could have been far more efficiently flown and supported from the United States, with fewer logistical problems, and possibly with less publicity than that which resulted from Guatemalan operations.)

(3) The restriction prohibiting use of American contract pilots for aerial supply of guerrilla forces. (Cuban pilots demonstrated at an early date their inability to perform these missions. American pilots, on the other hand, have proved their ability in this field in many areas of the world, working with a variety of indigenous forces. The failure to supply guerrilla organizations was a critical failure in the overall operation.)

(4) The restriction prohibiting use of a base in the United States for tactical air operations in support of the amphibious landing. (About nine hours were required to turn around a B-26 for a second mission over the target from Nicaragua, and pilots were physically unable to fly more than one mission per day. In the actual operation, numerous aircraft were forced to land in the United States or British territory due to fuel shortage, and were out of action during the critical period. From a base in Florida, the number of sorties flown could have been doubled or tripled, and fighter aircraft could have been used to protect the bombers. Location of bases in third countries also complicated security and logistical problems and increased the likelihood that use of the bases would be denied soon after commencement of operations.)

(5) The restriction prohibiting use of American contract pilots for tactical air operations. (Authority was granted to hire American pilots, but not to use them. Some American pilots were thrown into the amphibious operation during the second and third days as an emergency measure. Use of adequate numbers of highly skilled, combat-experienced American pilots in the initial air operations could have spelled the difference between success and failure.)

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(6) The restriction preventing use of more effective tactical aircraft than the B-26 bomber.

(7) The restrictions preventing the full application of the tactical air power available. (The preferred plan presented by the Paramilitary Staff called for full-scale air attacks by all available aircraft on military airfields, as well as against tank, artillery and truck parks, commencing at dawn of D-1 and involving another maximum effort at dusk and continuation of full-scale operations on D-Day and thereafter. Pressure by the Department of State against the use of tactical air resulted in the watering down of this plan. See paragraphs 11, 12 and 14. The initial air strike on D-2 was made against three airfields only, and only eight of the fifteen available bombers were permitted to participate.

(An initial full-scale raid by all fifteen of the available bombers would certainly have had a much greater destructive effect than the raid by eight aircraft, and might have eliminated Castro's tactical air force at one blow.

(Restrictions on the employment of napalm also reduced the effectiveness of operations. Use of this weapon against concentrated aircraft, tanks, artillery, and trucks clearly visible in up-to-date aerial photographs could have been a decisive factor. For example, one photograph revealed a concentrated tank park with 36 tanks and a truck park with 150 trucks. Napalm could have eliminated these, as well as other tank, truck, and artillery parks revealed by other available photography. By limiting the number of aircraft in the initial surprise strike, and leaving these important targets untouched, Castro was given the opportunity to disperse these concentrations.

(Cancellations at the last moment, while the troops were already off the beaches preparing to land, of the air attacks planned for 0540 on D-Day against Castro's remaining tactical aircraft, doomed the operation to failure. See paragraph 23b.

(Restrictions which prevented the full application of available airpower in accordance with sound

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tactical principles must be regarded as primarily responsible for failure of the amphibious operation.)

b. The Department of State was the principal advocate of the restrictions listed above. The rationale of these self-imposed restrictions rested upon what proved to be an unrealistic requirement, impossible of fulfillment under the circumstances, to conduct operations in such a way as to be non-attributable to the United States, or, at least, plausibly deniable. In the interest of non-attributability, the requirement for operational effectiveness was so completely subordinated that the end result was "too little, too late", and the United States had to bear publicly the responsibility for a failure rather than the responsibility for a success. The price paid by the United States in terms of public clamor by our enemies was high enough to have covered the cost of additional measures that could have been taken to ensure success. It seemed to this writer through the many months of this effort, that the United States was trying to achieve a very important objective at a very small cost to itself, while it would have been in the national interest to act more boldly and openly and accept more risks as might be necessary to ensure that every needed measure would be taken to win the objective, which had to be won, and still must be won, and soon, if all Latin America is not to be lost to Communism.

27. CONCLUSIONS. The following conclusions are based upon my experiences of the past eight months as Chief of the Paramilitary Staff of the Central Intelligence Agency Cuba Project:

a. The Government and the people of the United States are not yet psychologically conditioned to participate in the cold war with resort to the harsh, rigorous, and often dangerous and painful measures which must be taken in order to win. Our history and tradition have conditioned us for all-out war or all-out peace, and the resort to war-like measures in any situation short of all-out war is repugnant to the American mentality. In order to win the cold war, this inhibition must be overcome.

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b. In a cold war paramilitary operation, there is a basic conflict of interest between considerations of military effectiveness on the one hand and political considerations on the other. Since in the cold war national survival does not seem to be immediately at issue (although this writer would deem that it is), political considerations tend to dominate, with the result that military measures are progressively restricted and subordinated. Experiences of the past few years indicate that political restrictions on military measures may result in destroying the effectiveness of the latter, and the end result is political embarrassment coupled with military failure and loss of prestige in the world.

c. Paramilitary operations cannot be effectively conducted on a ration-card basis. Therefore, if political considerations are such as to prohibit the application of all military measures required to achieve the objective, then military operations should not be undertaken.

d. Civilian officials of the Government should not attempt to prescribe the tactics of military or paramilitary operations.

e. For an effort of the kind made against Cuba, detailed policy guidance, in writing, is required from the national level. A national plan should be written at the outset, setting forth the responsibilities and tasks of every Department and Agency concerned. An organization must be provided for directing and coordinating the actions by all Departments and Agencies in the economic, political, psychological and military fields.

f. In pursuing an operation of the kind conducted against Cuba, governmental machinery must be established for prompt, decisive resolution of policy questions as they arise.

g. Paramilitary operations of any appreciable size cannot be conducted on a completely covert basis, and the requirement for non-attributability introduces tremendous complications in the accomplishment of what would otherwise be simple tasks. Since paramilitary operations on an increasing

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scale will probably be required as we face years of cold war in the future, the United States should be prepared to operate more boldly and overtly in this field, as do our enemies of the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

g. The Central Intelligence Agency does not have required organization, equipment, procedures, bases, facilities nor staff for the planning and conduct of paramilitary operations. It cannot conduct such operations without relying heavily upon the Department of Defense for personnel, equipment, supplies, facilities, and other support.

i. Primary responsibility for all paramilitary matters, including the organization, equipping, training, operational employment and support of indigenous guerrilla forces, should be assigned to the Department of Defense, which has vast human and material resources and proper organization and procedures for accomplishment of these functions.

j. All military operations of any kind, including those of a paramilitary nature, should be under the direction and control of the Unified Commander in whose area the operations are to take place. It would be advisable to form a special task force within the Unified Command, with representation from Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and C.I.A. as required, for conduct of paramilitary operations.

k. Within the Department of Defense, the responsibility for ground paramilitary matters should be assigned to the Army Special Forces, since these forces are especially trained and organized for such missions.

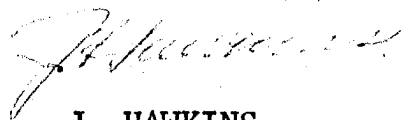
l. It would be advisable for all members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to attend meetings with the President and Cabinet Officers at which any military matters are to be discussed. It cannot be expected that any single military officer can advise adequately on all the technical aspects of air, sea, and ground warfare. The Cuban operation was essentially a seaborne invasion. Such operations are a specialty of the Navy and Marine Corps. Therefore, the Chief

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of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, if present at all meetings, would have been able to contribute invaluable advice at the proper time.

m. A Communist-style police state is now firmly entrenched in Cuba, which will not be overthrown by means short of overt application of elements of United States military power. Further efforts to develop armed internal resistance, or to organize Cuban exile forces, should not be made except in connection with a planned overt intervention by United States forces.



J. HAWKINS
Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps

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28. REFERENCE LIST

- (a) JCS Memo 57-61 of 3 February 1961, to Secretary of Defense; Subject: Military Evaluation of the C.I.A. Paramilitary Plan, Cuba.
- (b) JCS Memo 146-61 of 10 March 1961, to Secretary of Defense; Subject: Evaluation of C.I.A. Cuban Volunteer Task Force.
- (c) JCS Memo 166-61 of 15 March 1961, to Secretary of Defense; Subject: Evaluation of Military Aspects of Alternate Concepts of C.I.A. Paramilitary Plan, Cuba.

NOTE: Above references are not available for attachment to this paper. If the reader desires to read these attachments, approval must be obtained from the following:

Colonel M. R. Olson, USMC
Executive Officer, SACS
Room 1 E 9629
Pentagon
Code 11-5-3051

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29. ENCLOSURES

1. Copy of Colonel Hawkins Memo of 4 January 1961 to Chief, WH/4; Subject: Policy Decisions Requested for Conduct of Strike Operations Against Cuba
2. TRINIDAD (Concept of Operation)
3. Appendix 1 (Target List) to Annex E (Tactical Air Support) to Operation Plan, ZAPATA
4. Anti-Castro Resistance in Cuba: Actual and Potential, dated March 16, 1961
5. "Cuba: The Record Set Straight", Charles J. V. Murphy, Fortune Magazine, September 1961, pp. 92-237

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C O P Y

ENCLOSURE 1

4 January 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, WH/4

SUBJECT: Policy Decisions Required for Conduct
of Strike Operations Against Government
of Cuba

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this memorandum is to outline the current status of our preparations for the conduct of amphibious/airborne and tactical air operations against the Government of Cuba and to set forth certain requirements for policy decisions which must be reached and implemented if these operations are to be carried out.

2. Concept:

As a basis for the policy requirements to be presented below, it would appear appropriate to review briefly the concept of the strike operations contemplated and outline the objectives which these operations are designed to accomplish.

The concept envisages the seizure of a small lodgement on Cuban soil by an all-Cuban amphibious/airborne force of about 750 men. The landings in Cuba will be preceded by a tactical air preparation, beginning at dawn of D-1 Day. The primary purpose of the air preparation will be to destroy or neutralize all Cuban military aircraft and naval vessels constituting a threat to the invasion force. When this task is accomplished, attacks will then be directed against other military targets, including artillery parks, tank parks, military vehicles, supply dumps, etc. Close air support will be provided to the invasion force on D-Day and thereafter as long as the force is engaged in combat. The primary targets during this time will be opposing military formations in the field. Particular efforts will be made to interdict opposing troop movements against the lodgement.

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The initial mission of the invasion force will be to seize and defend a small area, which under ideal conditions will include an airfield and access to the sea for logistic support. Plans must provide, however, for the eventuality that the force will be driven into a tight defensive formation which will preclude supply by sea or control of an airfield. Under such circumstances supply would have to be provided entirely by air drop. The primary objective of the force will be to survive and maintain its integrity on Cuban soil. There will be no early attempt to break out of the lodgement for further offensive operations unless and until there is a general uprising against the Castro regime or overt military intervention by United States forces has taken place.

It is expected that these operations will precipitate a general uprising throughout Cuba and cause the revolt of large segments of the Cuban Army and Militia. The lodgement, it is hoped, will serve as a rallying point for the thousands who are ready for overt resistance to Castro but who hesitate to act until they can feel some assurances of success. A general revolt in Cuba, if one is successfully triggered by our operations, may serve to topple the Castro regime within a period of weeks.

If matters do not eventuate as predicted above, the lodgement established by our force can be used as the site for establishment of a provisional government which can be recognized by the United States, and hopefully by other American states, and given overt military assistance. The way will then be paved for United States military intervention aimed at pacification of Cuba, and this will result in the prompt overthrow of the Castro Government.

While this paper is directed to the subject of strike operations, it should not be presumed that other paramilitary programs will be suspended or abandoned. These are being intensified and accelerated. They include the supply by air and sea of guerrilla elements in Cuba, the conduct of sabotage operations, the introduction of specially trained paramilitary teams, and the expansion of our agent networks throughout the island.

3. Status of Forces:

a. Air. The Project tactical air force includes ten B-26 aircraft currently based in Guatemala and at Eglin Air Force Base. However, there are only five Cuban B-26 pilots

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available at this time who are considered to be of high technical competence. Six additional Cuban pilots are available, but their proficiency is questionable.

It is planned that seven C-54 and four C-46 transports will be available for strike operations. Here again, the number of qualified Cuban crews is insufficient. There is one qualified C-54 crew on hand at this time, and three C-46 crews.

Aviation ordnance for conduct of strike operations is yet to be positioned at the strike base in Nicaragua. Necessary construction and repairs at this base are now scheduled to commence, and there appears to be no obstacle to placing this facility in a state of readiness in time for operations as planned.

Conclusions:

(1) The number of qualified Cuban B-26 crews available is inadequate for conduct of strike operations.

(2) The number of qualified Cuban transport crews is grossly inadequate for supply operations which will be required in support of the invasion force and other friendly forces which are expected to join or operate in conjunction with it in many parts of Cuba. It is anticipated that multiple sorties will be required on a daily basis.

b. Maritime. Amphibious craft for the operation, including three LCU's and four LCVF's are now at Vieques, Puerto Rico, where Cuban crew training is progressing satisfactorily. These craft with their crews will soon be ready for operations.

The BARBARA J (LCI), now enroute to the United States from Puerto Rico, requires repairs which may take up to two weeks for completion. Its sister ship, the BLAGAR, is outfitting in Miami, and its crew is being assembled. It is expected that both vessels will be fully operational by mid-January at the latest.

In view of the difficulty and delay encountered in purchasing, outfitting and readying for sea the two LCI's, the decision has been reached to purchase no more major vessels,

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but to charter them instead. The motor ship, RIO ESCONDIDO (converted LCT) will be chartered this week and one additional steam ship, somewhat larger, will be chartered early in February. Both ships belong to a Panamanian Corporation controlled by the GARCIA family of Cuba, who are actively cooperating with this Project. These two ships will provide sufficient lift for troops and supplies in the invasion operation.

Conclusion:

Maritime assets required will be available in ample time for strike operations in late February.

c. Ground. There are approximately 500 Cuban personnel now in training in Guatemala. Results being achieved in the FRD recruiting drive now underway in Miami indicate that extraordinary measures may be required if the ranks of the Assault Brigade are to be filled to its planned strength of 750 by mid-January. Special recruiting teams comprised of members of the Assault Brigade are being brought to Miami to assist in recruiting efforts in that city and possibly in other countries, notably Mexico and Venezuela. All recruits should be available by mid-January to allow at least four to six weeks of training prior to commitment.

The Assault Brigade has been formed into its basic organization (a quadrangular infantry battalion, including four rifle companies, and a weapons company). Training is proceeding to the extent possible with the limited number of military instructors available. This force cannot be adequately trained for combat unless additional military trainers are provided.

Conclusions:

(1) It is probable that the Assault Brigade can reach its planned strength of 750 prior to commitment, but it is possible that upwards of 100 of these men will be recruited too late for adequate training.

(2) Unless U. S. Army Special Forces training teams as requested are sent promptly to Guatemala, the Assault Brigade cannot be readied for combat by late February as planned and desired.

(3) The Assault Brigade should not be committed to action until it has received at least four and preferably six

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weeks of training under supervision of the U. S. Army teams. This means that the latter half of February is the earliest satisfactory time for the strike operation.

4. Major Policy Questions Requiring Resolution:

In order that planning and preparation for the strike operation may proceed in an orderly manner and correct positioning of hundreds of tons of supplies and equipment can be effected, a number of firm decisions concerning major questions of policy are required. These are discussed below.

a. The Concept Itself.

Discussion. The question of whether the incoming administration of President-elect Kennedy will concur in the conduct of the strike operations outlined above needs to be resolved at the earliest possible time. If these operations are not to be conducted, then preparations for them should cease forthwith in order to avoid the needless waste of great human effort and many millions of dollars. Recruitment of additional Cuban personnel should be stopped, for every new recruit who is not employed in operations as intended presents an additional problem of eventual disposition.

Recommendation. That the Director of Central Intelligence attempt to determine the position of the President-Elect and his Secretary of State-Designate in regard to this question as soon as possible.

b. Timing of the Operation.

If Army Special Forces training teams are made available and dispatched to Guatemala by mid-January, the Assault Brigade can achieve acceptable readiness for combat during the latter half of February, 1961. All other required preparations can be made by that same time. The operation should be launched during this period. Any delay beyond 1 March, 1961, would be inadvisable for the following reasons:

(1) It is doubtful that Cuban forces can be maintained at our Guatemalan training base beyond 1 March 1961. Pressure upon the Government of Guatemala may become unmanageable if Cuban ground troops are not removed by that date.

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(2) Cuban trainees cannot be held in training for much longer. Many have been in the camp for months under most austere and restrictive conditions. They are becoming restive and if not committed to action soon there will probably be a general lowering of morale. Large-scale desertions could occur with attendant possibilities of surfacing the entire program.

(3) While the support of the Castro Government by the Cuban populace is deteriorating rapidly and time is working in our favor in that sense, it is working to our disadvantage in a military sense. Cuban jet pilots are being trained in Czechoslovakia and the appearance of modern radar throughout Cuba indicates a strong possibility that Castro may soon have an all-weather jet intercept capability. His ground forces have received vast quantities of military equipment from the Bloc countries, including medium and heavy tanks, field artillery, heavy mortars and anti-aircraft artillery. Bloc technicians are training his forces in the use of this formidable equipment. Undoubtedly, within the near future Castro's hard core of loyal armed forces will achieve technical proficiency in the use of available modern weapons.

(4) Castro is making rapid progress in establishing a Communist-style police state which will be difficult to unseat by any means short of overt intervention by U. S. military forces.

Recommendation. That the strike operation be conducted in the latter half of February, and not later than 1 March 1961.

c. Air Strikes.

The question has been raised in some quarters as to whether the amphibious/airborne operation could not be mounted without tactical air preparation or support or with minimum air support. It is axiomatic in amphibious operations that control of air and sea in the objective area is absolutely required. The Cuban Air Force and naval vessels capable of opposing our landing must be knocked out or neutralized before our amphibious shipping makes its final run into the beach. If this is not done, we will be courting disaster. Also, since our invasion force is very small in comparison to forces which may be thrown against it, we must compensate for numerical inferiority by effective tactical air support not only during the landing but thereafter as long as the force remains in combat. It is

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essential that opposing military targets such as artillery parks, tank parks, supply dumps, military convoys and troops in the field be brought under effective and continuing air attack. Psychological considerations also make such attacks essential. The spectacular aspects of air operations will go far toward producing the uprising in Cuba that we seek.

Recommendations.

(1) That the air preparation commence not later than dawn of D minus 1 Day.

(2) That any move to curtail the number of aircraft to be employed from those available be firmly resisted.

(3) That the operation be abandoned if policy does not provide for use of adequate tactical air support.

d. Use of American Contract Pilots.

The paragraph above outlines the requirement for precise and effective air strikes, while an earlier paragraph points up the shortage of qualified Cuban pilots. It is very questionable that the limited number of Cuban B-26 pilots available to us can produce the desired results unless augmented by highly skillful American contract pilots to serve as section and flight leaders in attacks against the more critical targets. The Cuban pilots are inexperienced in war and of limited technical competence in navigation and gunnery. There is reason also to suspect that they may lack the motivation to take the stern measures required against targets in their own country. It is considered that the success of the operation will be jeopardized unless a few American contract B-26 pilots are employed.

With regard to logistical air operations, the shortage of Cuban crews has already been mentioned. There is no prospect of producing sufficient Cuban C-54 crews to man the seven C-54 aircraft to be used in the operation. Our experience to date with the Cuban transport crews has left much to be desired. It is concluded that the only satisfactory solution to the problem of air logistical support of the strike force and other forces joining it will be to employ a number of American contract crews.

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Recommendation.

That policy approval be obtained for use of American contract crews for tactical and transport aircraft in augmentation of the inadequate number of Cuban crews available.

e. Use of Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

The airfield at Puerto Cabezas is essential for conduct of the strike operation unless a base is made available in the United States. Our air base in Guatemala is 800 miles from central Cuba--too distant for B-26 operations and for air supply operations of the magnitude required, using the C-46 and C-54 aircraft. Puerto Cabezas is only 500 miles from central Cuba--acceptable, although too distant to be completely desirable, for B-26 and transport operations.

Puerto Cabezas will also serve as the staging area for loading assault troops into transports much more satisfactorily than Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, which is exposed to hostile observation and lacks security. It is planned that troops will be flown in increments from Guatemala to Puerto Cabezas, placed in covered trucks, loaded over the docks at night into amphibious shipping, which will then immediately retire to sea.

Conclusion:

The strike operation cannot be conducted unless the Puerto Cabezas air facility is available for our use, or unless an air base in the United States is made available.

Recommendation.

That firm policy be obtained for use of Puerto Cabezas as an air strike base and staging area.

f. Use of U. S. Air Base for Logistical Flights.

An air base in southern Florida would be roughly twice as close to central Cuba as Puerto Cabezas. This means that the logistical capability of our limited number of transport aircraft would be almost doubled if operated from Florida rather than Puerto Cabezas. Logistical support of the strike

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force in the target would be much more certain and efficient if flown from Florida.

There is also a possibility that once the strike operations commence, conditions would develop which would force us out of the Nicaraguan air base. Without some flexibility of operational capability including an additional logistical support air base with pre-positioned supplies in the United States, we could conceivably be confronted with a situation wherein the Assault Brigade would be left entirely without logistical air support. Supply by sea cannot be relied upon, for the Brigade may be driven by superior forces from the beach area. Such a situation could lead to complete defeat of the Brigade and failure of the mission.

It seems obvious that the only real estate which the United States can, without question, continue to employ once the operation commences is its own soil. Therefore, an air base for logistical support should be provided in the United States. This will offer the possibility of continued, flexible operations, if one or both of our bases in Guatemala and/or Nicaragua are lost to our use.

Recommendation.

That policy be established to permit use of an air base in southern Florida (preferably Opa Locka which is now available to us and has storage facilities for supplies) for logistical support flights to Cuba.

J. Hawkins
Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps
Chief, WH/4/PM

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ENCLOSURE 2

TRINIDAD (CONCEPT OF OPERATION)

1. MISSION. Commencing at H-hour on D-day, the Assault Force lands, seizes, occupies, and defends a lodgement in the TRINIDAD-CASILDA area in order to establish a base from which further land and air operations can be launched against the Castro government of CUBA.
2. CONCEPT OF OPERATION.
 - a. On D-day the Assault Force conducts an amphibious/airborne landing in the TRINIDAD area.
 - b. Prior to D-day, sabotage activities are directed at reducing and destroying the GOC ground, air and naval capability throughout CUBA, with particular emphasis on air, communications, transportation, armor, artillery and POL. Propaganda activities are intensified in order to obtain active support of the Cuban populace.
 - c. On D-1 tactical support aircraft attack major GOC air force installations in order to destroy aircraft on the ground and to inflict maximum damage to runways and control and communications facilities. Attacks are also launched against tank parks, artillery parks, motor transportation, and other military targets.
 - d. At about H-6 hours a tactical deception operation is conducted in the LA FE area of PINAR DEL RIO in order to cause movement of enemy forces away from the area of intended actual operations.
 - e. Immediately prior to and following H-hour on D-day, tactical support aircraft provide air support for the Assault Force in landing and seizure of objectives, with particular attention to enemy defensive installations and troop formation in the immediate objective area. Major rail and highway bridges west and northwest of TRINIDAD and along the coastal road toward CIENFUEGOS are bombed in order to isolate the objective area. Daily armed reconnaissance missions are continued in order to prevent movement of enemy forces against the lodgement.
 - f. Commencing at H-hour, the Assault Force lands by landing craft (LCVP and LCU) over designated beaches, (Beaches 1 and 2), and by parachute in designated drop zone, seizes objectives A, B, and C, and on order of Assault Force Commander, seizes objectives E and F. (Annex D--

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- Operation Overlay).
- g. After seizure of initial objectives, the Assault Force attempts to obtain cooperation, assistance and good-will of the local populace in the TRINIDAD-CASILDA area. Combat inside the City of Trinidad is avoided. Facilities such as the hospital in TRINIDAD and the port facilities and petroleum supplies at CASILDA are converted to Brigade use.
 - h. After consolidation of the lodgement, Assault Force coordinates operations with local guerrilla leaders and civil leaders in the area making maximum efforts to organize, equip and employ additional forces and incorporate them under command of the Brigade Commander.
 - i. Upon seizure and preparation of the airfield at TRINIDAD, transport aircraft (C-46) utilize this base for supply and evacuation operations.
 - j. Follow-up logistic support is provided by air landing, air drop and seaborne means on a scheduled basis and in response to call of Brigade Commander.
 - k. In the event the TRINIDAD area cannot be held, the Assault Brigade, on order of the Brigade Commander, withdraws to the ESCAMBRAY MOUNTAINS in order to continue resistance operations against the Castro government. Support for these operations will be provided by aerial means.

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ENCLOSURE 3

Appendix 1 (Target List) to Annex E (Tactical Air Support) to
Operation Plan (ZAPATA)

1. On D-day, the following targets will be attacked:
 - a. San Antonio de los Banos Air Base (2252N-8231W)
 - b. Campo Libertad Air Base (2305N-8227W)
 - c. Santiago de Cuba Air Base (Antonio Maceo) (1957N-7551W)
 - d. Managua Military Base (2258N-8218W)
 - e. Santa Clara Air Base (2229N-7955W)
 - f. Playa Baracoa Air Base (near Havana)
 - g. Cienfuegos Air Base (Jaime Gonzalez) (2209-8025W)
 - h. Naval craft at or near Cienfuegos Naval Station
 - i. Naval craft at or near Batabano Naval Station
 - j. Nueva Geron Airfield (Isle of Pines) (2150N-8247W)
 - k. Bauta International Broadcasting Station (2259N-8232W)
 - l. Topes de Collantes Military Base.
 - m. San Julian Air Base - Jose Marti International Airport -
Camaguey Airfield.

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ENCLOSURE 4
16 March 1961

Anti-Castro Resistance in Cuba: Actual and Potential

1. There are now from 2,500 to 3,000 persons in Cuba engaged in active resistance against the Castro regime. It is our estimate that a well-organized, well-armed force, successful in securing a lodgement on Cuban soil, would receive the active support of 25% of the Cuban populace and would be opposed, at the maximum, by no more than 20% of the people. (Of the remaining 65%, the majority would adopt an attitude of neutrality until such time as there was a strong indication of which side had the better chance of victory.)
2. While Castro has been able to disperse small groups of poorly-armed insurgents, he has been unable to eliminate them or to prevent a general increase in resistance activities throughout the island. Las Villas, with 600 active guerrillas, remains the principal center of resistance, but Oriente (380 actives), Camaguey, and Matanzas are increasingly hostile to the regime. In the past six weeks, insurgent groups have been reported from three points in Oriente, one in Camaguey, and three in Matanzas. In Havana itself there was an attempt to assassinate Ernesto Che Guevara and attacks were made on a refinery, several tank trucks, and two large stores. A plan is underway in Pinar del Rio for seizure of a major air base with the assistance of Army and Navy personnel from Castro's own forces. Sabotage is occurring at a steadily mounting tempo, with cane fields burning at the rate of 15,000 tons per week. At Santiago de Cuba an attack on the refinery was mounted successfully by an agent team within the harbor of Raul Castro's stronghold.
3. The forces which remain loyal to Castro are, for the most part, younger students, Communists, and those who have a stake in the regime. The latter consists of government officials, persons who have benefitted from the distribution of seized properties, and those who have received, or believe they will receive, various benefits (such as new housing and employment). Castro is opposed

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by former property holders, business and professional people, the clergy, students in Catholic schools, most of those persons originally in his own movement, and, increasingly, by the very classes he professes to champion - the laborers and the peasants. Reasons for this opposition are many. The increasingly virulent attacks on the Catholic Church are disturbing a people 90% Catholic, even those who are only nominal members. Workers have seen their unions become instrumentalities for Communist propaganda, and their leaders, including many non-Communist leftists, imprisoned and denounced. All classes are aware of the economic deterioration. There are shortages, not only of luxuries, but of such essentials as soaps, fats, automotive parts, salt, eggs, rice, and beans. The increased numbers of Soviet Bloc and Chinese Communist "advisors" and the regime's uncritical acceptance of the international Communist line have alienated, not only the conservatives, but also the non-Communist left and those intellectuals unwilling to serve as toadies to a foreign ideology. The regime's disregard for objective justice and the rule of law, the increase in the arbitrary powers and the arrogance of the Security Services, the drum-head execution of young counter-revolutionaries, have convinced many Cubans that beneath the propaganda myth Castro's regime is little different from that of Batista.

4. General discontent disillusionment, however, are ineffective against a loyal, disciplined armed force. The people are ready to support a new regime, but they will not enjoy that opportunity if the bulk of Castro's military forces will fight for him. It is our estimate that those forces, if confronted by a trained opposition element with modern weapons and a unified command, will largely disintegrate. It is significant that most of the leaders of anti-Castro insurgent groups are Army officers who once fought with Castro against Batista. The Army has been systematically purged, and most of it is now serving in labor battalions or on routine garrison duty. There is great resentment in the Army at this down-grading, the subordination to the Militia, and the imprisonment of such popular leaders as Huber Matos. The Air Force has lost nearly all of its better pilots and navigators and does not constitute an effective combat force. All of the few senior Navy officers and many of the younger ones would welcome an opportunity to desert Castro. We estimate that a significant portion (35 to 40%) of the Army would join an opposition force if given the opportunity, and that the remainder would not fight. The Air Force would likely defect en masse. This would leave as Castro's chief reliance, the Militia.

5. The Militia is well-armed with individual weapons (rifles and submachine guns) and is receiving increasingly effective

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training. Within it are the "hard-core" of Castro supporters. Despite this, it is our estimate that not more than 5,000 to 8,000 would fight to the end for Castro, and then only if they were united in elements made up of similar die-hards, which, except in Havana, they are not. While some of the Militia joined for the glamour of a uniform, most members became so because they had no other choice. In the Escambray one Army commander urged Castro to withdraw all the militia because of their ineffectiveness. And it is significant that when the fighting became more serious in that area, three Army battalions were called in despite the presence of 40,000 militia who were opposed by no more than 800 insurgents. Reports of heavy militia casualties have spread throughout the Island. Where terrain is favorable and opposition light, the militia can be effective through sheer weight of numbers, e.g., against Captain Clodomiro Miranda and only thirteen followers, Castro employed six battalions. In rough terrain or against determined opposition that effectiveness becomes minimal.

6. In summary, it is our estimate that conditions within Cuba are now favorable for the overthrow of the regime if an effective, well-armed opposition force can secure a lodgement on the island, that the active resistance to Castro will increase rapidly from the present 2,500 to 3,000 to a figure at least ten times that size once a landing is effected, and that the Castro military forces, faced with such opposition, will not exceed a maximum of 8,000 to 10,000 effectives. It is our further estimate that even the hard-core pro-Castro forces will not be effective outside the area of Havana, and that any opposition force that can advance as far as Havana will accrue to it such defectors from the Castro military as will give it superiority in numbers.

Cuba: The Record Set Straight *

by Charles J.V. Murphy

Not long ago, at President Kennedy's daily staff meeting, the special assistant for national security affairs, McGeorge Bundy, opened the proceedings by noting, "Sir, we have four matters up for discussion this morning." The President was not in a zestful mood. "Are these problems which I inherited?" he asked. "Or are they problems of our own making?" "A little of both," was Bundy's tactful answer.

The exchange revealed a new and saving humility. Some days after this incident, Kennedy addressed the nation on the subject of Berlin. The ebullience, the air of self-assurance that marked his first months in office had gone. He spoke earnestly to his countrymen but his words were also aimed at Premier Khrushchev, who up to this point had appeared not to be listening. This time Kennedy did get through to Moscow; and any lingering doubt about the American determination to defend Berlin was dispelled by the response of the American people. The President's will to stand firm was clear, and the nation was with him.

Nevertheless, in any full review of John Kennedy's first months in office, there must be reported a failure in administration that will continue to inhibit and trouble American foreign policy until it is corrected. This failure raises a fair question: whether Kennedy has yet mastered the governmental machinery, whether he is well and effectively served by some of his close advisers, and whether they understand the use of power in world politics. The matter is of vital importance; in the crises that will inevitably arise around the world--in the Middle East, in Africa, in the Far East, in Central Europe--the U.S. Government must be in top form, and possibly even, as Kennedy himself suggested, act alone.

* Fortune, September 1961, pages 92 - 237, passim.

Administrative confusions came to light most vividly in the Cuban disaster. That story is told here for the first time in explicit detail. It is told against the background of the U.S. reversal in Laos, which in itself should not be underestimated: Laos, once in the way of becoming a buffer for its non-Communist neighbors, is all but finished; now, in South Viet-Nam, Ngo Dinh Diem, a stout friend of the U.S., is under murderous attack by Communist guerrillas; the U.S. loss of face is being felt from the Philippines to Pakistan, and in the long run the damage may prove to be even more costly than that caused by Cuba.

Let us turn back then to the train of events, beginning with Laos, that culminated in the disaster in the Bay of Pigs. FORTUNE is publishing the account for one purpose--to set the record straight for concerned Americans.

Kennedy, from the day he took office, was loath to act in Laos. He was confident that he understood the place and use of power in the transactions of the nation, but he was baffled by this community of elephants, parasols, and pagodas. Then, too, he brought to office a general surmise that our long-range prospects of holding the new and weak nations of Southeast Asia in the Western camp were doubtful in the extreme. In this respect, he was leaning toward the Lippmann-Stevenson-Fulbright view of strategy. This school holds that U.S. power is overcommitted in Southeast Asia, and that the proper aim for U.S. diplomacy there should be to reduce local frictions by molding the new states as true neutrals.

The U.S. position in Laos had become acute while Dwight Eisenhower was still in office. Eisenhower must therefore bear a considerable part of the blame for the U.S. failure; he let a situation go from bad to worse, and indeed he apologized to Kennedy for leaving "a mess," and that it might take the intervention of U.S. troops to redeem it. There had been a moment when the struggle in Laos had turned in favor of the pro-U.S. forces under General Phoumi Mosavan, the former Defense Minister. In a series of small but decisive engagements, more by maneuver than by shooting, Phoumi eventually took the capital, Vientiane, early in December, but at this point the Russians intervened openly on the side of the Communist faction, the Pathet Lao. In concert with a large-scale push by well-trained troops from North Viet-Nam, they introduced a substantial airlift into northern Laos (an operation that still is continuing).

The collapse of the Royal Laotian Army then became inevitable unless the U.S. came in with at least equal weight on Phoumi's side. One obvious measure was to put the airlift out of business. The job could have been done by "volunteer" pilots and the challenge would at least have established, at not too high an initial risk for the U.S., how far the Russians were prepared to go. Another measure would have been to bring SEATO forces into the battle, as the SEATO treaty provided.

In the end, Eisenhower decided to sheer away from both measures. The State Department was opposed to stirring up India and the other Asian neutrals. Secretary of State Christian Herter agreed in principle that the independence of Laos had to be maintained, yet he was unable to bring to heel his own desk officers and the policy planners, who were apprehensive that even a limited military action would wreck the possibility of some kind of political accommodation with Moscow. The policy shapers, especially in State, hung back from any sequence of actions that might have committed U.S. policy on the central issue: that Laos was worth fighting for. Even the modest additional support that the Defense Department tried to extend to Phoumi's U.S.-equipped battalions in the field during the last weeks of the Eisenhower Administration was diluted by reason of the conflict between Defense and State. Under Secretary of Defense James Douglas was later to say, "By the time a message to the field had been composed in Washington, it had ceased to be an operational order and had become a philosophical essay." And a vexed Phoumi was to exclaim that the reasoning of the American Ambassador, Winthrop Brown, was beyond his simple Oriental mind. "His Excellency insists that my troops be rationed to a few rounds of ammunition per man. He tells me that I must not start a world war. But the enemy is at my throat."

After the responsibility passed to Kennedy in January, Phoumi's position was still not completely hopeless, if he had been able to get adequate help. But early in March a sudden Communist descent drove him off a position commanding the principal highway in northern Laos. That unfortunate action was the turning point in his part of the war. For the relative ease with which it was done raised in Washington the question of whether Phoumi's troops had the will to fight.

By then Kennedy was committed to the Cuba operation. He therefore now had to reckon with the very real possibility, were U.S. forces to become involved in Laos, of having to back off from Cuba.

At this juncture Kennedy's foremost need was a clear reading of Soviet intentions. For this he turned to his

"demonologists," the New Frontier's affectionate term for its Soviet experts. The most influential among them--Charles E. Bohlen, State's senior Sovietologist, and Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson at Moscow--were agreed that Khrushchev personally had too much respect for U.S. power to stir it into action, as Stalin had carelessly done in Korea. Yet, while Khrushchev was plainly indulging his preference for "salami" tactics, it was impossible to judge how big a slice he was contemplating or whether he was being pushed by Mao Tse-tung. The only reading available to Kennedy was, in a word, ambiguous. Maybe Khrushchev was moving into a vacuum in Laos just to keep out Mao. If so, then the least chancy response for the U.S. was to assume that Khrushchev would be satisfied with a thin slice in Laos, and to maneuver him toward a compromise--a neutral government in which, say, the Pathet Lao would have some minor representation.

This course was urged by Secretary of State Dean Rusk and also was being pressed by Prime Minister Macmillan in London. It came to be known as Track Two. It was intended to lead to a cease-fire followed by negotiation. Oppositely, the Joint Chiefs of Staff still believed, as they did under Eisenhower, that the military challenge demanded a military showdown: action by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, under which a mixed allied force, including Americans, would move into Laos and take over the defense of the important cities, thereby freeing the Royal Laotian Army to move into the field without risk of being sapped by subversion in the rear. This option was labeled Track One, and it was favored as well by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and his deputy, Roswell Gilpatric.

While Kennedy favored Track Two and supported a conciliatory note that Macmillan sent to Moscow, he decided he also had to make a show of starting down Track One, in case the political gamble failed. He permitted himself a dramatic gesture. At his televised press conference on March 23, he addressed himself somberly to a map of Laos--a country "far away" but in a world that is "small." Its independence, he went on, "runs with the safety of us all," and in language that all but told Khrushchev that he was in for a fight, he implied that the U.S. was preparing to go to its defense. There was, meanwhile, a tremendous deployment of U.S. forces in the Far East, involving the Seventh Fleet and Marine combat units on Okinawa. The Army's strategic-strike units in the U.S. were made ready. A belated effort was made to buck up Phoumi's forces with an increased flow of fighting gear. U.S. military "advisers" went into the field with his battalions. Against this background, on March 26, Kennedy went to Key West and met Macmillan, who was on a visit to the West Indies. The

Prime Minister made it clear that Britain considered Laos hardly worth a war, and wanted no part in a SEATO action. (De Gaulle, in a separate exchange, had told Kennedy flatly that France would not fight in Laos.)

From that point on, the idea of a military showdown in Laos looked less and less attractive to the President. He did issue one warning to the Russians that might have been construed as having a military tone. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko called at the White House and Kennedy took him into the rose garden, beyond earshot of his staff, and said, "The U.S. does not intend to stand idly by while you take over Laos." But that was the last run along Track One.

By then, Rusk was in Bangkok for a meeting of the SEATO powers, still hoping to extract from the meeting at least a strong statement that would condemn the Soviet intervention in Laos and reassert the determination of the SEATO powers to defend the new nations of Southeast Asia. In this mission Rusk failed. None of the ranking Democratic Congressmen, or Republican, spoke up in favor of intervention. Moreover, when Kennedy pressed the military chiefs for specific recommendations, he got divided answers. General Thomas White, then Air Force Chief of Staff, and Admiral Arleigh Burke, then Chief of Naval Operations, were both confident that the Communist penetration could be defeated and Laos saved. They said that since the Communists could throw far more manpower into the battle, the U.S. war plan would have to include the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons on a limited scale. They maintained, however, that a clear U.S. resolution to employ nuclear weapons, if there was a need, might in itself discourage further Communist penetration. General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General George H. Decker, Army Chief of Staff, had much less confidence in the U.S. ability to stop the Communists. Lemnitzer expressed the apprehension that U.S. military action in Laos might be matched by Red China and Russia in a fast reopening of the war in Korea. Two such wars, by his calculation, might require no fewer than twenty U.S. divisions, more than the Army had in its entire order of battle, as well as general mobilization to support them.

"In effect," Kennedy demanded, "you're telling me that I can't do anything--without starting a nuclear war?" This, he swore, he'd never do, which by itself was a startling reversal of a fundamental premise of the Eisenhower strategy: that U.S. forces would have recourse to nuclear tactical weapons on whatever scale the pursuit of U.S. objectives required. The White House, while conceding to the Communists the option of uninhibited escalation, would not tolerate even a limited escalation on the nuclear side by our own forces. Any military

move in Laos therefore seemed hopeless.

The fear of the nuclear escalation factor became the sanction for the policy that was pursued thereafter. In light of this, the scene of Kennedy addressing himself to the map of Laos, in his first public appearance as Commander-in-Chief, is now memorable for its fleeting revelation of a spirited man who was eager to present himself as a strong President, but who all too quickly turned unsure of his principal resource of power.

The chiefs, although they took different views of the risks of the Laos situation, were fundamentally agreed on a central point. And that was that the U.S. had to be prepared to employ tactical nuclear weapons. But Kennedy and his civilian strategists, moving away from the nuclear base of the Eisenhower strategy, read into their professional differences a bankruptcy of means and doctrine. The low esteem in which Kennedy began to hold the military leaders whom he inherited from the Eisenhower Administration has not been concealed.

Secretary of Defense McNamara is rewriting the Eisenhower strategic doctrine, in collaboration with the political scientists at the White House and State. The backing away from nuclear strategy, which ended in the U.S. retreat in Laos, is now being formalized by McNamara. (His prescription will call for a conventional base for NATO strategy in the defense of Berlin.)

So there was, by early April, even as Laos was slipping farther and farther below Kennedy's horizon, a breakdown of communication between the political and the military sides of the government, and this would contribute largely to the failure of Kennedy's next venture.

The Cuba affair has been called the American Suez. In the sense that Suez, too, was an utter fiasco, the bracketing is wryly accurate. There is, however, a clear difference between the two operations. Ill-managed as it was, the Suez invasion would have succeeded had not Eisenhower used the influence of the U.S. to bring three Allies--Britain, France, and Israel--to a humiliating halt. (It should be recorded that neither Britain, France, nor Israel made any critical comment on the U.S. excursion in Cuba.) In Cuba the defeat was wholly self-inflicted. Even as the expedition was creeping into the Bay of Pigs, just before midnight of April 16, the political overseers back in Washington were in the process of knocking out of the battle plan the final, irreducible element needed for victory.

If the U.S. military are without a peer in any one technique of warfare, it is in putting forces ashore across a hostile beach. For the Bay of Pigs, all the necessary means were at Kennedy's hand. It was, by the standards of General David M. Shoup's Marines, an elementary amphibious operation in less than battalion strength. And, indeed, as a tactical exercise, it was well devised and daringly and successfully led. But after the strategists at the White House and State had finished plucking it apart, it became an operation that would have disgraced even the Albanians. When Kennedy looked around for the blunderer, he found him everywhere and nowhere. Practically everybody in his inner group of policy movers and shakers had been in on the planning. Only after the disaster was upon them did he and his men realize that a venture which was essentially a military one had been fatally compromised in order to satisfy political considerations. One not unfriendly official who also served under Eisenhower was later to observe: "Cuba was a terrific jolt to this new crowd because it exposed the fact that they hadn't really begun to understand the meaning and consequences of action--the use or misuse of power, in other words. They had blamed Ike's apparent inaction on indecision and plain laziness. Cuba taught them that action, any kind of serious action, is hard and certainly no safe business for amateurs."

The idea for the invasion had taken root during the early summer of 1960. By then, thousands of defectors from Castro's Cuba were in the U.S. Many of them were professional soldiers. The job of organizing and training them was given to the Central Intelligence Agency, as the government's principal mechanism for mounting covert operations of this sort. It became and remained to the end the specific responsibility of one of the CIA's top deputies, Richard M. Bissell, a former economist who is also a highly practical executive. Among his other first-class accomplishments, Bissell had masterminded the U-2 operation, which was, until it finally missed, as one day it had to, the most economical and comprehensive innovation in espionage in modern times.

Training camps for the exiles were set up in a district in western Guatemala offering some privacy. The original idea was to feed the recruits back into Cuba, to reinforce the several thousand anti-Castro guerrillas already established in the mountains. Toward the autumn, however, a more ambitious and riskier project came under tentative consideration. Castro was organizing large formations of militia and was obviously bent on crushing the counterrevolutionary movement before the Cuban populace caught fire. With a view to saving the movement, it was proposed to build up an invasion force big enough to seize and to hold on the Cuban shore a beachhead

sufficiently deep for the expedition to proclaim a provisional government, and so provide a rallying base for the discontented. By this time, too, the rudiments of an anti-Castro air force were in training nearby. The planes, however, were all obsolete--mostly propeller-driven, B-26's, twin-engine bombers of World War II vintage that had been redeemed from the Air Force's graveyard. Associated with them was a troop-carrying squadron with which a small detachment of paratroopers was training.

During the summer and fall of 1960, Eisenhower from time to time personally reviewed the scheme. In late November, the last time it came up for his comprehensive review, an operational plan had not yet crystallized; no timetable for action had been set. Across the Potomac at the Pentagon, Under Secretary of Defense Douglas, who was charged with quasi-military operations under the noncommittal category of collateral cold-war activities, was keeping a watchful eye on the project, and releasing such military talent and gear as the CIA requisitioned. Neither he nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff (whose connection with the project remained informal at this stage) believed that much good would flow from an attack made by Cubans alone. For one thing, the resources then available permitted the training of only 300 men or so, and the air unit had but a dozen planes. This was hardly enough to bring down a tough, well-armed regime, and Douglas repeatedly counseled more realism in the planning. Indeed, it was taken for granted by Douglas and the others directly concerned that a landing in force could not possibly be brought off unless the expedition was shepherded to the beach by the U.S. Navy (either openly or in disguise), and covered by air power in whatever amount might be necessary. Eisenhower, the commander of Normandy, understood this well enough.

"You may have to send troops in"

It became obvious toward the end of 1960 that Ike would be out of office well before an effective force would be ready. So the decision as to how big the show should be, and how conspicuous should be the U.S. share, and in what role, was no longer his to make. Given the relaxed attitude at the White House, the military chiefs also relaxed; military concern for the enterprise sank to the "Indians"--from the four-star level to the colonels on the Joint Staff who had been advising the CIA in such matters as training and tactics. Bissell was encouraged, on the one hand, to go forward with preparations for an invasion, but he was cautioned to be ready to fall back to the more modest objective of simply generating a supply of reinforcements for the anti-Castro forces in the mountains.

Before Eisenhower was fully rid of his responsibility, however, a number of disquieting developments combined to impart to the enterprise an air of emergency. It was established that Castro was to start receiving, early in 1961, substantial deliveries of Soviet jet fighters, and that pilots to man them were already being trained in Czechoslovakia. From all indications, these would provide him, by early summer, with an air force that would be more than enough to extinguish the last chance of a successful invasion by Cuban exiles; it would be by all odds the most powerful air force in Latin America. Two other developments were scarcely less worrisome. Castro was making progress in his systematic destruction of his enemies in the mountains, upon whose cooperation the invasion counted, and there was no way, save by an overt air supply to get guns and ammunition to them. The stability of the exile movement itself was, moreover, coming into question. Warring political factions threatened to split their ranks, and men who had trained long and painstakingly were impatient over the failure of their American advisers to set a sailing date. The feeling took hold of them and their American sponsors that it was to be in the spring or never.

After his election, Kennedy had been briefed fairly frequently on the Cuba situation, along with that in Laos. As his hour of authority approached, the question of what to do about Cuba was increasingly on his mind. The problem had a personal angle. In his fourth television debate with Richard Nixon, he had sharply blamed the Eisenhower Administration for permitting Communism to seize a base there, "only ninety miles off the coast of the U.S." He discussed Cuba, along with Laos, at length in both of his pre-inaugural talks with Eisenhower, and by his stipulation. Ike was inclined to rank Cuba below Laos in terms of urgency, but Cuba clearly worried him. In their second conversation Ike said: "It's already a bad situation. You may have to send troops in."

The first necessity: control of the air

On taking office, Kennedy at once called for a detailed briefing on the condition and prospects of the U.S.-fostered operation. This information was supplied by Allen W. Dulles, the director of the CIA, and by Bissell. After Kennedy had heard them out he decided that he had to have from the Joint Chiefs of Staff a technical opinion of the feasibility of the project. It is at this point that the locus of responsibility begins to be uncertain.

The operation was not a Department of Defense responsibility. Only once before, in early January, had the chiefs formally

reviewed the plan, at Eisenhower's invitation. Now they were asked only for an "appreciation" of its validity. The enterprise, moreover, had expanded considerably in scope and aim in the past few months. With more than 100,000 Cuban refugees in the U.S., recruiting had stepped up, and the organizers were at this point aiming at a landing force of about 1,000 men. An operational plan for a landing on the south coast of Cuba, near the town of Trinidad, was finally beginning to jell. There the country was open, with good roads leading into the Escambray Mountains and the needed link-up with the indigenous guerrillas. Also cranked into the plan were ingenious schemes--a barrage of radiobroadcasts from nearby islands and showers of pamphlets from airplanes--intended to galvanize the anti-Castro Cubans in the cities and villages into demonstrations as the invaders struck. It was never explicitly claimed by the CIA that a general uprising was immediately in the cards; the intention was to sow enough chaos during the first hours to prevent Castro from smashing the invasion on the beach. Once the beachhead was consolidated, however, and if fighting gear went forward steadily to the guerrillas elsewhere in Cuba, the planners were confident that a mass revolt could be stimulated.

Finally, the plan still assumed that U.S. military help would be on call during the landing. Castro's air force consisted of not quite two-score planes--a dozen or so obsolete B-26's, plus about the same number of obsolete British Sea Furies, also slow, propeller-driven airplanes. But in addition there were seven or eight T-33 jet trainers, the remnants of an earlier U.S. transaction with the Batista government, so the force was not the pushover it appeared at first glance. Armed with rockets, these jets would be more than a match in a battle for the exiles' B-26's. The scheme was to destroy them on the ground in advance of the landing, by a series of attacks on Castro's airfields; should the T-33's escape the first surprise blow, there would be ample opportunity to catch them later on the ground while they were being refueled after an action. In any event, a U.S. carrier would be close by, below the horizon, and one or two of its tactical jets could presumably supply whatever quick and trifling help might be required in an emergency.

It stood to reason that, considering how small the landing party was, the success of the operation would hinge on the B-26's controlling the air over the beachhead. And the margins that the planners accepted were narrow to begin with. The B-26's were to operate from a staging base in a Central American country more than five hundred miles from Cuba. The round trip would take better than six hours, and that would leave the planes with fuel for only forty-five minutes of action, for

bombing and air cover over Cuba. In contrast, Castro's air force could be over the beachhead and the invaders' ships in a matter of minutes, which would increase his relative air advantage manifold. Hence the absolute necessity of knocking out Castro's air power, or at least reducing it to impotence, by the time the ground battle was joined.

This, in general terms, was the plan the chiefs reviewed for Kennedy. The assumptions concerning the possibilities of an anti-Castro uprising not being in their jurisdiction, they took these at face value. They judged the tactical elements sound and, indeed, they accorded the operation a high probability of success. They were allowed to appraise the training and the equipment of the forces. A team of officers was sent to Guatemala. On the basis of its report, the chiefs made several recommendations, but again their assessment was favorable.

Late in January, Kennedy authorized the CIA to lay on the invasion plan, but he warned that he might call the whole operation off if he had a change of mind as to its wisdom. D-day was tentatively fixed for March 1 but this proved impossible to meet. For one thing, it took some time to organize the quarrelsome exiles in New York and Miami into a workable coalition that would sponsor the expedition. For another, it was decided that a battalion of about 1,400 men was needed to secure a beachhead, and that the force, which called itself the Cuban Brigade, should be beefed up generally. In consequence of these developments, the target date kept slipping until it finally came firm as April 17.

It has since been reported that the President was inwardly skeptical of the operation from the start but just why has never been clear--whether he judged the force too small to take on Castro, or because he was reluctant to take on so soon a nasty job that was bound to stir up an international ruckus, however it came out. Some of his closest advisers, in any case, were assailed by sinking second thoughts. What bothered them was the "immorality" of masked aggression. They recoiled from having the U.S. employ subterfuge in striking down even so dangerous an adversary as Castro, and they were almost unanimously opposed to having the U.S. do the job in the open. Even with the best of luck, there would certainly be a flutter among the six leading Latin-American states, which, with the exception of Venezuela, had refused to lend themselves to any form of united action against Castro. And the repercussion would scarcely be less embarrassing among the neutralists of Asia and Africa, whose good opinion Kennedy's advisers were most eager to cultivate. And so the emphasis at the White House and State began to move away from a concern with the

military considerations--the things needed to make the enterprise work--and to become preoccupied with tinkering they hoped would soften its political impact on the neutral nations.

The dismembering begins

The "immorality" of the intervention found its most eloquent voice before the President during a meeting in the State Department on April 4, only thirteen days before the date set for the invasion. (Stewart Alsop told part of the story in a recent issue of the Saturday Evening Post.) The occasion was Bissell's final review of the operation, and practically everybody connected with high strategy was on hand--Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, General Lemnitzer, CIA chief Allen Dulles, as well as Bundy, Paul Nitze, Kennedy's specialist on strategic planning at the Pentagon, Thomas Mann, then Assistant Secretary of State for Latin-American Affairs, and three of Kennedy's specialists in Latin-American matters--Adolf Berle, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Richard Goodwin. There was also one outsider, Senator William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who had been Kennedy's favorite choice for Secretary of State, and whose support he wanted. After Bissell had completed his briefing and Dulles had summed up the risks and prospects, Fulbright spoke and denounced the proposition out of hand: it was the wrong thing for the U.S. to get involved in.

Kennedy chose not to meet this issue. Instead, he quickly noted certain practical considerations and then, going around the table, he asked various of his advisers whether they thought the operation should go forward. Without exception, the answer was, yes. Berle was particularly outspoken. He declared that "a power confrontation" with Communism in the Western Hemisphere was inevitable anyhow. As for this enterprise. "Let 'er rip" was his counsel. Mann, who previously had been on the fence, now spoke up for the operation. Rusk, too, said he was for it, in answer to the President's direct question, but as would presently be manifest, he privately had no heart for it. Two other men among the President's senior foreign-policy advisers, not present at the meeting, shared Fulbright's feelings: Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles, and Adlai Stevenson, with the United Nations in New York, who soon came to know in a general way that something distasteful was afoot. In deference to these views, Kennedy--either at the meeting or soon afterward--made two separate rulings that were to contribute to the fatal

dismemberment of the whole plan. First, U.S. airpower would not be on call at any time: the obsolescent B-26's flown by "our" Cubans would be on their own. Second, the B-26's could be used in only two strikes before the invasion--first on D-minus-two-days (April 15) and again on the morning of the landing. Although these limitations clearly lengthened the risks, Lemnitzer did not dispute them, nor did Bissell's own military advisers; they were confident that if the B-26's missed the T-33's on the first go, they would surely catch them on the second.

During the few remaining days, Kennedy drew his circle of advisers more tightly around him. Apart from Bundy and Rostow, the only White House advisers who remained privy to the development of the operation were the Latin-American experts--Adolf Berle and Schlesinger. Lemnitzer and, of course, Allen Dulles were in and out of Kennedy's office. But the doubts of Rusk and Fulbright and of others were all the while imperceptibly converging on the President and, bit by bit, an operation that was marginal to begin with was so truncated as to guarantee its failure.

The embarkation of the expedition was scheduled to start on April 10. This was, in itself, quite a job. Some half-dozen small steamers were collected for the first movement, together with a number of tactical landing craft. The take-off point was a port on the Caribbean, several hundred miles from the training area in Guatemala, and the transfer of the Cuban Brigade was done by air and at night, through four nights, in the interest of secrecy. The gear aboard the ships was enough to supply the landing force through ten days of battle, and also to equip the thousands of guerrillas expected to be recruited after the beachhead was gained.

Only a week before the embarkation, and indeed only a day or so before the last go-around at the State Department, another serious change was made in the invasion plan. At the insistence of the State Department, Trinidad was eliminated as the target landing area. State's reasons were complex. Rusk decided that the entire operation had to be kept "unspectacular" and minimize the overtness of the U.S. role as much as possible. That required shifting the attack to a less populated and less accessible area, where Castro's reaction might be slower and less effective. Rusk and his own advisers were also anxious to be rid at all possible speed of the incubus of responsibility for mounting the operation in Central America, anxious that the B-26's should be based as rapidly as possible on Cuba. The only vulnerable airfield capable of taking the planes was one in poor condition near the Bay of Pigs, on the Zapata Peninsula, about 100 miles to the west of

Trinidad. Here the countryside was quite deserted and, to succeed at all, the invaders had to seize and hold two narrow causeways leading across a swamp that was impassable on either side. These actions did not end the last-minute curtailments directed by the White House. Even the arrangements for arousing the Cuban populace and trying to stampede Castro's militia with leaflet raids and radiobroadcasts were struck from the plan, and again because State was afraid that they would be too obvious a showing of the U.S. hand. On April 12, while the convoy was heading north, Kennedy was impelled to announce at a press conference that the U.S. would not intervene with force in Cuba. Rusk made sure the idea got home by repeating the same guarantee on the morning of the invasion. The effect of this was to serve notice on the Cubans in Cuba, who were known to be waiting for an encouraging signal from the U.S., that whatever they might be tempted to try would be at their own risk.

The politicians take command

Clear to the end, Kennedy retained tight control of the enterprise. As each new sequence of action came up for his final approval--the Go signal for the embarkation, then for the pre-invasion air strike on the morning of April 15, he came to his decisions quickly and firmly. All the way, however, he reserved the option to stop the landing short of the beach. He kept asking how late the enterprise might be reversed without making it look as if Castro had called an American bluff. He was told: noon on Sunday, April 16, when the invasion force would be eleven hours of steaming from the Bay of Pigs. The Sunday deadline found Kennedy in the Virginia countryside, at Glen Ora; only then did he raise his finger from the hold button. As he did so, he noted with relief that no other unfavorable factors had materialized. He was mistaken. At dawn of the day before, by the timetable, the B-26's, having flown undetected through the night from their Central American staging base, appeared over Cuba and bombed the three fields on which Castro's ready air was deployed. (The attack was, on the whole, highly successful. Half of Castro's B-26's and Sea Furies, and four of his T-33 jets were blown up or damaged and so removed from the imminent battle.) The story was put out that Castro's own pilots, in the act of defecting, had attacked their own airfields. This was a gloss, to say the least; the attackers were indeed defectors from Castro, but they had defected long before. Later that afternoon, at the United Nations, after the Cuban Foreign Minister, Raul Roa, had charged that the attack was a "prologue" to a U.S. invasion, Adlai Stevenson arose and swore that the planes were Castro's.

From this hapless moment on, Stevenson's role becomes unclear. There was a subsequent published report that he intervened to block the second strike. Stevenson has flatly denied, and continues to deny, that he even knew about the second strike, let alone that he demanded that it be called off. But there was little doubt about his unhappiness over the course of events in the Caribbean and he conveyed these feelings to Washington. Before Sunday was over Bundy was to fly to New York, to see Stevenson (Bundy said) and still wearing, in his haste to be off, sneakers and sports clothes. This sudden errand followed a shattering order that went out to Bissell.

It was Sunday evening, only some eight hours after Kennedy had given "the go-ahead." In the first dark, the expedition was even then creeping toward the Cuban shore. In Bissell's office there was a call on the White House line. It was Bundy, being even crisper than usual: the B-26's were to stand down, there was to be no air strike in the morning, this was a presidential order. Secretary of State Rusk was now acting for the President in the situation. If Bissell wished to make a "reclama" (federalese for appeal), it could be done through Rusk.

Bissell was stunned. In Allen Dulles' absence (he was in Puerto Rico), he put his problem up to CIA Deputy Director Charles Cabell, an experienced airman. Together they went to the State Department to urge Rusk to reconsider a decision that, in their judgment, would put the enterprise in irretrievable peril. Cabell was greatly worried about the vulnerability to air attack first of the ships and then of the troops on the beach. Rusk was not impressed. The ships, he suggested, could unload and retire to the open sea before daylight; as for the troops ashore being unduly inconvenienced by Castro's air, it had been his experience as a colonel in the Burma theatre, he told his visitors, that air attack could be more of a nuisance than a danger. One fact he made absolutely clear: military considerations had overruled the political when the D-minus-two strike had been laid on; now political considerations were taking over. While they were talking, Rusk telephoned the President at Glen Ora to say that Cabell and Bissell were at his side, and that they were worried about the cancellation of the strike. Rusk, at one point, put his hand over the mouthpiece, and asked Cabell whether he wished to speak to the President. Cabell shook his head. Perhaps that was his mistake; it was certainly his last chance to appeal a lamentable decision. But Bundy had made it clear that Rusk was acting for the President, and Cabell is a professional military man, trained to take orders after the facts had been argued with the man in command.

On their return to the office, Bissell flashed orders to the B-26 commander at the staging field, more than 500 miles from the Bay of Pigs. The force got the changed orders shortly before midnight, only half an hour or so before they were scheduled to depart; the bomb bays were already loaded and the crews were aboard. Meanwhile the planes carrying the paratroopers had taken off, and the first assault barges, still unobserved, were even then approaching the beaches.

Tuesday, the turning point

Past midnight, in the early watches, Bissell and Cabell restudied the battle plan, while signals of consternation welled up from their men far to the south. At four o'clock, less than an hour before first light on the Cuban shore, Cabell went back to Rusk with another proposal. It was manifestly impossible for the Brigade's small force of B-26's (only sixteen were operational) to provide effective air cover for the ships from their distant base against jets that could reach the ships in minutes. Cabell now asked whether, if the ships were to pull back of the three or twelve-mile limit, whichever distance U.S. legal doctrine held to be the beginnings of international water, the U.S.S. Boxer, a carrier on station about fifty miles from the Bay of Pigs, could be instructed to provide cover for them. Rusk said no and this time Cabell finally took advantage of the reclama that Bundy had extended to Bissell. The President was awakened. Cabell registered his concern. The answer was still no.

Shortly after that, on Monday morning, April 17, Brigadier General Chester Clifton, the President's military aide, received word that the Cuban Brigade had landed. They had little chance. They were without the ranging fire power that the B-26's with their bombs and machine guns had been expected to apply against Castro's tanks and artillery as they wheeled up. Castro's forces came up fast. He still had four jets left, and they were indeed armed with powerful rockets. He used them well against the ships in the bay. Before the morning was done, he had sunk two transports, aboard which was the larger part of the reserve stocks of ammunition, and driven off two other, with the rest of the stock.

Now Kennedy and his strategists became alarmed. About noon on Monday, Bissell was told that the B-26's could attack Castro's airfields at will. Orders went to the staging base for a major attack next morning. But the orders came too late. Most of the pilots had been in the air for upwards of eighteen hours in an unavailing effort to keep Castro's planes off the

troops and the remaining ships. That night a small force was scratched together. It was over Cuba at dawn, only to find the fields hidden by low, impenetrable fog. Nothing came of the try.

Tuesday, the second day, was the turning point. The men ashore had fought bravely and gained their planned objectives. They had even seized and bulldozed the airfield. But they were desperately short of ammunition and food, and under the pressure of Castro's superior fire power and numbers they were being forced back across the beach; three B-26's trying to help them were shot down.

Two small landing craft had made rendezvous with two remaining supply ships and taken on ammunition and rations; but, from where they were, they could not reach the beach until after daybreak, at which time Castro's jets were certain to get them. There remained still one last clear chance to make the thing go. Boxer was still on station. The release of a few of its jets simply for air cover should see the two craft safely to the shore.

"Defeat is an orphan"

That night Kennedy was caught up in a White House reception, a white-tie affair, for Congress and the members of his Cabinet. He was informed by an aide that Bissell wished to see him. The President asked Bissell to come to the White House. Calls went out to the other principals--to Rusk, who had been entertaining the Greek Premier at a formal dinner at the State Department, to McNamara, General Lemnitzer, Admiral Burke.

They gathered in the President's office shortly after midnight. One of the participants recalls: "Two men dominated that singular occasion--the President and Bissell. Bissell was in the unhappy posture of having to present the views of an establishment that had been overtaken by disaster. He did so with control, with dignity, and with clarity." Bissell made it plain that the expedition was at the point of no return; unless U.S. airpower was brought forward, the men on the beach were doomed. In substance, he asked that the Boxer's planes be brought into the battle to save the operation. Rusk still would not have this. Several others were also opposed, including the President's personal staffers. Burke vouched for the worth of Bissell's proposition. The discussion with the President lasted until 2:00 A.M. Its outcome was a singular compromise. Jets from the Boxer would provide cover next morning for exactly one hour--from 6:30 to 7:30 A.M.,

just long enough for the ships to run into the shore and start unloading, and for the remaining B-26's to get in a hard blow.

Next morning, through an incredible mischance, the B-26's were over Cuba half an hour ahead of schedule. Boxer's jets were still on the flight deck. But Castro's jets were ready. Two of the B-26's were shot down; others were hit and forced to abort. That was the melancholy end. At two-thirty that afternoon, Bissell received word from one of his men aboard a ship in the Bay of Pigs: remnants of the landing force were in the water and under fire. There was a final message from the gallant Brigade commander ashore to this effect, "I have nothing left to fight with and so cannot wait. Am headed for the swamp." Bissell went to the White House to report the end. Kennedy gave orders for a destroyer to move into the bay and pick up as many men as it could. It was no Dunkirk. Only a few of the 1,400 were saved.

"Victory," Kennedy noted some days later, "has a hundred fathers, and defeat is an orphan." Yet, for all Kennedy's outward calmness at this moment of defeat, he was never, after it, quite the same. Speaking before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, a grave President said, "There are from this sobering episode useful lessons for all to learn."

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